

The saga of
Marion
Barry

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GORBACHOV'S TRAGIC DILEMMA



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An ancient conflict in a new age

By Fred Halliday

For the third time this century, the crisis erupting in the southern Soviet republic of Azerbaijan has placed this oil-producing region at the center of international conflict. Yet it is a mistake to view the triangular battle of Azeris, Armenians and Russians as simply a product of traditional enmities because many of the causes of this latest crisis are contemporary ones—economic decline, revolt in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States and the sometimes contradictory impact of *perestroika*. But the clash has reactivated older internal and international conflicts as well.

Until the early 19th century, the Turkish-speaking region of Azerbaijan belonged to Iran. Following a czarist defeat of Persian forces Azerbaijan was partitioned, with the northern half, including Baku, going to Russia, and the southern half, with its capital at Tabriz, remaining part of Iran. Baku itself encompasses the remnants of a medieval Turkish town, the extravagance of the oil boom of the late 19th century and the anonymous mass buildings contained within the Soviet urban areas.

During World War I, local Azerbaijani nationalists, with the help of Turkey, declared independence from Russia. But while Armenian and Russian revolutionary forces supported the Bolshevik revolution, rival Turkish and British armies occupied Baku. When Soviet forces re-established control of Baku in 1920, they chose its opera house as the site for the Baku Congress of the Peoples

of the East—a gathering of Asian extremists summoned to promote revolution throughout the Islamic and colonial worlds. In an attempt to harness Islamic radicalism, the Bolshevik leader Zinoviev called for a jihad against British colonialism. (It was while returning from the Baku Congress that the American writer John Reed died of cholera.)

A lighter shade of red: But nothing much came of the appeals for a united revolutionary front. Islamic radicalism and communism soon became rivals, and communist parties were unable to develop throughout the Islamic countries. A statue of a woman tearing off her veil stands in one of the main squares of Baku—a symbol of the suppression of Islamic institutions within Soviet Azerbaijan during the '20s and '30s. During World War II, however, a new opportunity presented itself.

When the Soviet Union, together with Britain, occupied Iran in 1941, the Soviets set up autonomous regional authorities in Iranian Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. With a growing communist movement in Iran, there was hope that a pro-Soviet Iranian Azerbaijan could act as the catalyst for a wider Iranian revolution. But with World War II over, the Soviet presence in Iranian Azerbaijan provoked a clash with the U.S. and Britain—it was in Azerbaijan, not Berlin or Trieste, that the Cold War began. In March 1946 Harry Truman, then the sole possessor of nuclear weapons, ordered the Russians to leave Azerbaijan. Following their departure that December, the shah's forces occupied Tabriz and destroyed the autonomous republic.

The most recent crisis has erupted at the site of the World War I conflicts in "northern" or Soviet Azerbaijan. The continued and aggravated rivalry between Armenians and Azerbaijanis became acute in the 1890s as Armenians began to play an active role in the economy, resulting in massacres on both sides during World War I. Azerbaijani hostility toward Armenians is similar to anti-Semitism in Russia and central Europe in that both were born out of economic rivalry, religious bigotry, resentment at what appears to be greater political and cultural influence and fear of territorial loss.

These animosities have existed throughout Soviet rule but have galvanized in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an "autonomous" region of about 200,000 people within Azerbaijan. While Nagorno-Karabakh has a largely Armenian population and is near Armenia proper, it has never belonged to Armenia. In recent years the Azerbaijanis have encouraged Azeri settlement there and sought to exert greater control over the territory, while the Armenians have sought to make it a part of the Armenian republic by altering the region's status. Thus Armenian resentment of Azeri domination and Azeri fear of Armenian expansionism have collided.

Nationalism revisited: This nationalist conflict has, however, occurred within the context of *perestroika*. Since 1985 it has become possible within the Soviet Union to express previously suppressed political views, encouraging the Soviet republics to take on a more independent economic and political role. But simultaneously the authority of the central government has been weakened, and

local communist parties have become less instruments of control from Moscow and more vehicles for local nationalist expression. At the same time, nationalists in the Soviet republics have been closely monitoring each other to see how far they can take their newfound independence.

The local soviet in Nagorno-Karabakh was the first such body anywhere in the Soviet Union to vote, two years ago, for a change in its territorial status, after stating that it wanted to become part of Armenia. The Azeris in the Nakhichevan region who recently tore down frontier posts with Iran claim they were influenced by televised accounts of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. While this "demonstration effect" stimulates nationalist movement, it also lends itself to Moscow's reluctance to make concessions which may unleash explosions elsewhere.

The implications of the crisis in Azerbaijan continue to unfold. It is clear that in the Caucasus itself—the easternmost region of Europe—the majority of the blame rests with the Azeri nationalists who provoked the killings. The Azeris, however, claim that the Soviet and international presses are dominated by anti-Moslem elements and thus favor the Armenians. But the fact remains that it is the Azeris whose passions have been inflamed. With the majority of the Armenians in Azerbaijan either dead or refugees, the danger of pogroms has been reduced. But the long-term enmity between the two republics remains, as does the unresolved question of the two exposed enclaves—Nagorno-Karabakh, threatened by the Azeris, and Nakhichevan, which faces attack by the Armenians.

Even if sectarian killing does come to a halt in the Caucasus, major controversies remain. The political cost to Mikhail Gorbachov of having to send in troops is substantial, especially since it was Moscow's indecision and

INSIDE STORY

confusion that allowed the crisis to culminate. Both the Azerbaijani and Armenian economies have been hard hit by fighting and strikes. Production stoppages in Azerbaijan, which produces much of the drilling and processing equipment used in the Soviet oil industry, will affect Soviet energy production and exportation—a serious blow since oil and gas account for 80 percent of Soviet export earnings.

Too close to the fire: Relations with Iran and Turkey also are suffering as neither Tehran nor Ankara want to become too closely involved in the conflict and neither favors Azerbaijani secession from the Soviet Union. But both countries may be forced to support what they regard as a struggle between Moslems and Turks. Despite the upsurge of nationalism in the '40s, the Azerbaijanis in Iran are far more integrated into the Iranian state and economy than those in the Soviet Union, as many Iranian merchants, mullahs and leading figures in the Tehran government, including spiritual leader Ali Khamene'i, are Azerbaijanis.

Iran also has major strategic interests in maintaining favorable relations with Moscow as it attempts to garner Soviet support in pressuring Iraq for peace. But the Iranian authorities cannot prevent men and weapons from crossing the frontier, and they are committed to rhetorical support of Islamic forces within the Soviet Union. They, like Gorbachov, exaggerate the extent of the Azerbaijani nationalists' Islamic orientation but are caught in a conflict that has escaped the control of Moscow and Tehran.

As in eastern Europe, it is not just the settlements of World War II but those of World War I as well that new nationalist uprisings permitted by *perestroika* have placed in question in the Caucasus. The Baku Congress has boomeranged on Bolshevik and Islamic revolutionary regimes alike.

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By Diana Johnstone

THE LITHUANIAN DEMONSTRATION OF intransigent nationalism and the ethnic bloodshed in the Caucasus that led to Soviet military intervention in Azerbaijan have been flashes of lightning illuminating the terrible tragedy stalking Mikhail Gorbachov and the Soviet Union.

Gorbachov came to power nearly five years ago convinced that "new thinking" was necessary and possible—necessary in order to shake the Soviet Union out of its stagnation and end the perilous deadlock of the arms race, possible because humanity must recognize that its very survival was threatened. New thinking meant abandoning class and national struggles for a reasonable willingness to work out problems in the interests of humanity as a whole.

New thinking sounds like mere wishful thinking in the light of the decision to send the Red Army into Azerbaijan. Sweet reasonableness failed to get a grip on a conflict between Armenians and Azeris, whose thinking seems as old as their Caucasian hills where Western man began his acrimonious existence (see story page 2). Gorbachov's deep gloom bore witness to awareness of this defeat. The hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan bring out some of the limits—perhaps fatal—of Gorbachov's approach.

His tragic flaw may prove to be his Western bias. It is tragic because it is also an essential asset. Without this Western bias Gorbachov could never have convinced the peoples of the West, almost singlehandedly, that the Cold War was over. In the longstanding contest for influence in Russia between Slavophiles and Westernizers, he is an all-out Westernizer, seeking to secure Russia's place in "our common European house." As Uzbek writer Timur Pulatov has pointed out, Gorbachov is essentially a Russian leader, not a master of the Soviet empire.

This Western bias has set him up for two drastic letdowns—one from the West, never ready to accept Russia as a full member of the club, and the other from the Islamic parts of the Soviet Union, excluded from the dream of a "European home."

More to the story: When news came of ethnic strife in the Caucasus, the West sided automatically with the Armenians against the Azeris. The Armenians are Christians, famous primarily as victims of Turkish genocide in 1915, a memory kept alive by large organized diasporas in the West, notably in North America and France. The West knows nothing of the Azeris except that they are Moslems. Obviously, without waiting for all the details, the West saw the Armenians as totally innocent and the Azeris as terrible Turks.

Few Azeris travel to the West. One who did is Rustam Ibrahimbekov, president of the film directors union of the USSR. In Paris on cinema business, he explained the view of moderate Azeris to Basil Karlinsky of the French daily *Libération*. The Azeris had been insensitive in their administration of Nagorno-Karabakh, he acknowledged, but it was Armenian nationalists who had broken the peace by demanding full control of the enclave, historically part of Azerbaijan but filled with Armenians by the czar in the last century. Some 200,000 Azeris were driven out of Armenia in recent months, and no-

Mikhail Gorbachov's 'new thinking' leaves him with tragic dilemma

thing was done to help them. It was these homeless Azeris who attacked Armenians in Baku in order to take over their apartments. The dreadful pogroms against Armenians were carried out by these desperate refugees and not by Azeris as a whole, he emphasized.

Neither Azeri nor Armenian allegations are easy to verify. The difference is that Armenian nationalist propaganda is relayed in the West by a devoted diaspora, whereas there is no political echo to Azeri statements.

France's Armenian community is a tightly knit lobby courted by politicians of all parties. Charles Hernu, who had to resign as defense minister in 1985 after sinking Greenpeace's flagship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, died of a heart attack on January 17 while addressing an Armenian meeting in Villeurbanne, the Lyons suburb where he was mayor. Four days later, French politicians from the right and left joined an Armenian demonstration in front of the Soviet Embassy in Paris demanding attachment of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and punctuated by shouts of "Free Armenia!" It seems never to have occurred to the organized Armenian community in France to use its relative wealth and distance to try to play a peacemaking role.

On the contrary, Franco-Armenians speak excitedly of sending armed volunteers to "fight for Armenia," encouraged by the "right to interfere" suddenly proclaimed by Paris intellectuals on the occasion of the upheaval in Romania.

This enthusiasm for distant Christian populations eerily recalls French support for Christians in Lebanon, encouraging the most wildly unrealistic warriors before leaving

Reason failed to stem a conflict between Armenians and Azeris, whose thinking seems as old as their Caucasian hills.

them in the lurch amid hopeless chaos.

Hamid Kherishchi, a theorist of the Azerbaijani Popular Front, told a Lithuanian newspaper (as retranslated for the West German *Tageszeitung*) that "people who talk of the idea of the European house simply want

to substitute the North-South contradiction for the East-West one." He warned that "the idea of a common European house will be a fiasco because this house splits the USSR."

The Russian Gorbachov seems to share the Western bias in favor of the Armenians enough to enrage Azeris, although not enough to satisfy Armenian nationalists. Geostrategic considerations seem mixed up with sentimental factors. More is involved than the traditional Russian protection of fellow Christian Armenians. Post-Brezhnev Russians are profoundly disenchanted with "the Third World," which they fear is dragging them down, and seek identification with the West in order to be pulled up. But in their turn toward the West the Russians are rapidly outdistanced by everybody further West than they are—not only their Warsaw Pact allies—the Poles, the Hungarians, the Czechs—but also by the westernmost republics of the Soviet Union itself, starting with the Baltic States the Gorbachovians counted on to provide an intermediary "bridge" to the West. But the "bridge" wants to cast off from the Soviet mainland and leave the Russians behind in the rush west-

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Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov: playing the leading role in a real-life tragedy.



By Joel Bleifuss

The hook is set

Commercial television has come to the Soviet Union. NIKA TV, as the new network is known, will be free—free from the control of the Communist Party and the government—and will depend only on public contributions and advertising revenues. The London-based Gemini news service reports that in the Soviet Union advertising is no longer condemned for "promoting consumerism and corrupting people's tastes." Indeed, Soviet executives are studying Western advertising techniques with the intent to emulate. NIKA TV President N. Lutsenko recently returned from a tour of U.S. television studios. His dream: to introduce rock-video and mail-order channels to the Soviet airwaves 24 hours a day.

Pressed into service

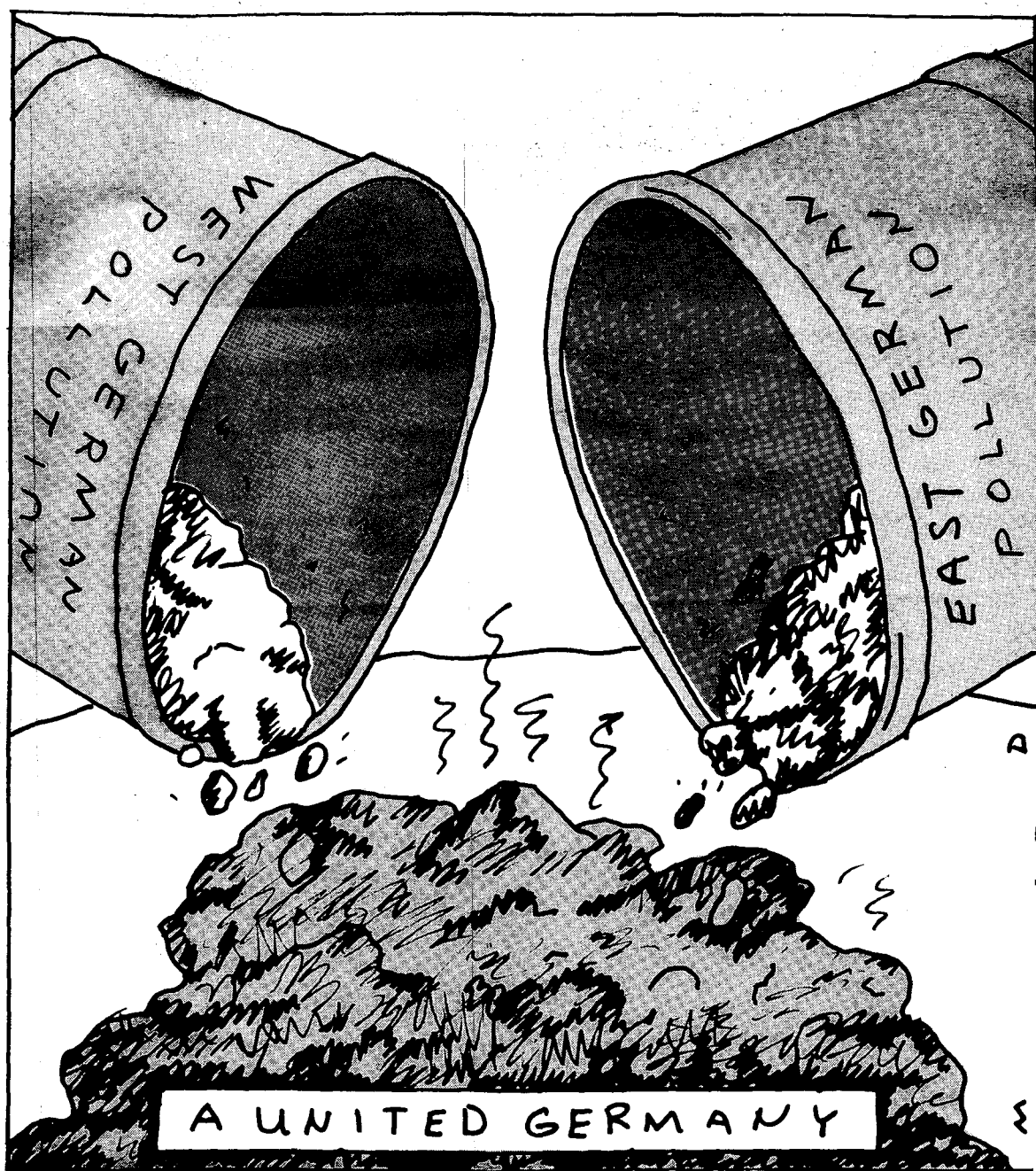
Should there be an Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Manhattan? For the past year this question has been a topic of hot debate at the Upper West Side school. According to the Air Force, the program "helps today's high school student become tomorrow's aerospace-age citizen." Retired Gen. Gregory Harris, one of the first black pilots and the vice president of a private military-support group known as the Air Force Association, thought Junior ROTC would be a fine program for King High. Principal Caesar Previdi agreed. Without mentioning it to his faculty, Previdi asked the New York City Board of Education to approve a Junior ROTC curriculum, which it did in June 1988. When word of this new aerospace-age department got out, many teachers at the high school were outraged. Last April they voted 102 to 59 to keep ROTC out of their school.

Teach warfare: While the faculty felt a ROTC program would make a mockery of the school's name, Harris tried to reassure the teachers. "There is no weapons training at the school," he said. "This is not a military program." But the teachers were not convinced, especially after learning that one of the Junior ROTC textbooks states that civilian populations can be valid targets for bombing with napalm and other weapons. (Harris accused his teacher-opponents of "wanting to fight the Vietnam War again.") Further, the ROTC program at King High would cost the board of education about \$53,000. The teachers thought the money could be better spent hiring a second college adviser for the school's 3,600 students and buying textbooks, of which there is a "terrible shortage." And then there is the question of racism. Last fall teachers Nina de Pels and Wayne Fischer wrote *In These Times*: "The program smacks of racism. Our school is overwhelmingly black and Hispanic, and ROTC represents an attempt to lure our highest achievers to the military—students who are very much sought after by good colleges. It is somewhat sinister that in New York City, ROTC programs, with one exception, have been placed in schools that are overwhelmingly populated by African-Americans and Latinos."

Flip-flop: In June 1989, after a lobbying effort by parents and teachers, the school board voted to reverse its decision and cancel the ROTC program. But two months later the board voted again, this time to reinstitute ROTC. Manhattan High School Superintendent Patricia Black, a faithful public servant, was following the wishes of school board President Robert Wagner Jr. when she signed the order. Wagner claims it is a coincidence that his father, former Mayor Robert Wagner Sr., sits on the executive council of Harris' Air Force Association. Young Wagner also says he was not influenced by warnings from Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) that failure to accept the program would be "shortsighted." In fact, Wagner says, "Martin Luther King himself would be supportive of the program." Not so, says Coretta Scott King, who wrote to the board last November. "My late husband, Dr. King, believed in the principles of non-violence and worked tirelessly to pass this message on to the youth of America. I believe that a military program has no place in a school named in his honor." The widow's words had their effect. Last month the board expelled Junior ROTC from King High.

Grave turnings

The death of Martin Luther King Jr. has not stopped him from speaking out through the mouths of others, especially when it comes to that overdriven concern of our day—drugs. Although King surely would have had something to say about the drug problem, it is doubtful he would goose-step to the Drug War's



German unification not a question for environmentalists

HAMBURG, WEST GERMANY—While German reunification remains an issue of high politics, on the ground East and West environmental groups are rapidly forging close bonds and cooperating across the former Iron Curtain.

Fertile ground for joint projects has been provided by the sickly state of the East German environment. Four decades of unregulated state socialist production have turned East Europe's industrial powerhouse into what West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* dubbed "a gigantic poison kitchen."

The first German-German environmental protest came just after the new year, against West German garbage in leaky East German dumps. The demonstration, which drew 150 protesters who blocked the drive to the giant Schoenberg disposal site and demanded an end to Western waste imports of some 5 million tons a year, seemed a small start. Since then, East-West ecological cooperation has really gotten into swing.

"There is so much being planned, you can't get a grasp on all the information," says Jens Wendelmuth of West Germany's Federation for Protection of the Environment and Nature (BUND).

Small but vocal environmental groups in the West German port city

of Hamburg, for example, have formed an Elbe Council with the environmental opposition in East Germany's third-largest city, Dresden, to protect the river that joins them. The 700-mile Elbe drains East Germany's industrial center in the south and emerges one of the dirtiest rivers in Europe.

The Dresden activists, organized under the protection of the Protestant church, uncovered the fact that their city of 500,000 has been dumping its sewage straight into the Elbe since January 1987 when its treatment plant broke down.

Meanwhile, the West German Federation for the Protection of Birds has joined East German naturalists to lobby for joint German nature parks along the border.

Until now, animals and plants had a quiet refuge in the militarized "forbidden zone" on the East German side of the frontier. The zone is now open, and conservationists fear the impact of tourism, development and industry in the untouched areas. Thirty East and West German environmentalists and naturalists also sent an open letter to both governments urging that military maneuver fields be made into nature refuges.

The first German-German conference of independent environmental groups is planned for late February in Dresden. Some 120 Dresden and Hamburg activists will discuss strategies for promoting alternative energy, waste reduction and environmentally sound disposal, urban

transportation planning and the cleaning of the Elbe.

What East German environmentalists want from the West, says East activist Michael Beletis of the industrial town of Gera, is help with organizational and technical skills, as well as simple information. The East German groups lack such tools as pollution-measuring devices, typewriters and copying machines. They also lack environmental data, which was a state secret under the old leadership.

At the same time, BUND's Wendelmuth says West German movements can learn from East German conservationists, who have acquired formidable expertise from years of quiet and diligent work establishing a patchwork of nature preserves.

The gravity of the pollution problem in East Germany, however, means that at least for now joint German projects are likely to remain focused on the East.

Priority issues, according to Beletis, include cutting back the country's dependency on high-sulfur brown coal, which is strip-mined domestically. East Germany gets more than 70 percent of its energy from brown coal burned at outdated power plants whose smokestacks, according to *Der Spiegel*, pump 5.6 million metric tons of sulfur dioxide into the air every year, more than any comparably sized area in Europe.

A second priority is cleaning up the chemical industry. "Giant chem-

ical complexes in the south work with primitive environmental protection technology or almost none at all," says Beletis. *Der Spiegel* reported that the Buna plant alone dumps around 20 kilograms a day of mercury into the Saale River.

East German soil and groundwater also suffer from pesticides and

animal waste from the country's heavily industrialized large-unit agriculture, Beletis says.

Unchecked pollution has reached the point where cities like Leipzig sit in almost permanent smog, and *Der Spiegel* reported that these cities show a corresponding increase in respiratory problems and cancer.

Driving teens away from education

CHAMPAIGN, ILL.—U.S. Rep. George Sangmeister is concerned about the nation's dropout rate. But instead of devoting elusive national resources to education, the Illinois Democrat is seeking a more severe way to keep teenagers in school.

Sangmeister is sponsor of a House resolution calling on states to revoke the driver's license of any high-school dropout under 18. States not complying would lose 5 percent of their federal highway funds. The proposal is expected to face hearings in the House Subcommittee on Surface Transportation in early February.

Sangmeister's plan is modeled after a West Virginia law that reduced the state's dropout rate from 17 percent to 16 percent in its first year, and the first-term congressman often points to West Virginia's success when he argues in favor of the measure.

Sangmeister suggests that support for such national legislation is growing, noting that eight states have adopted similar measures and 25 states are now considering such legislation.

"It is a modest proposal with targeted incentives for teens," Sang-

meister said when he submitted the bill for consideration last August. "Let us help our teenagers recognize the importance of a high school education by connecting it to the privilege they deem necessary and important: a license to drive a car."

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that about one-quarter of all 18- and 19-year-olds nationwide have not completed high school.

Some educators call Sangmeister's plan a "quick fix" that addresses only the symptoms of the problem, and they warn that the measure will not be effective unless it is part of a larger package. Sangmeister, however, says he is "not in a position of coming up with some entirely big package here that's going to solve all of the educational problems in this country."

An additional problem seen with Sangmeister's bill is that typical inner-city dropouts won't be swayed by the measure because they either don't have a license or don't drive. In addition, much of the management of the measure may be left to school administrations, putting a bureaucratic strain on school principals.

Civil libertarians see it as an encroachment on rights traditionally granted to 16-year-olds, saying that teenagers' driver's licenses should not be hostage to their attendance

The consequences are also clear in East Germany's murky water. *Der Spiegel* cited state hydrological charts, previously kept secret, that mark most of the industrial region's rivers in the color red—meaning "of only 'limited use' even as cooling water."

—Marcus Kabel

in school.

"They need to not simply revoke students' driver's licenses," says Jan Smink, executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. "They need to say, 'We want to give you an alternative learning process.'"

Education experts point to such academic alternatives as mentoring, where potential dropouts are counseled by older volunteers who have been successful academically. They also suggest programs designed to boost students' self-esteem, parent counseling that trains parents how to encourage their children academically and drug-abuse counseling.

Smink says that half of the West Virginia dropouts who returned to school have dropped out a second time and that some principals, wanting to keep some dropouts from re-enrolling, reportedly have not been informing state officials of truancy.

"When you take their driver's licenses away and force them to sit in classrooms, they'll continue to cut classes and continue to have discipline problems," says Susan Barto, spokeswoman for the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. "Just because they can't drive doesn't mean they can read and write."

—Jon Gardner

Cambodian guerrillas bring children to battle

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA—Ten boys in dark brown smocks with white trim marched from the prison to the reception center. These children, all aged 12 to 15, are among the latest victims of Cambodia's continuing civil war.

They are but a few of the 561 POWs being held by the Hun Sen government's Ministry of Correction. Nearly all of these young prisoners were captured by government forces late last year following a bitter battle between the Cambodian army and three guerrilla factions under the nominal leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Many of these boys had no aspirations to become soldiers but were inducted into guerrilla armies with no other choice.

The boys were given a packet of cigarettes to share, which they handled nervously during the interview. Although there was no evidence of maltreatment, all the boys appeared rather tense. The guard said they would be sent home "in the near future."

The youngest prisoner, 12-year-old Neth Sarith, said he was tending his cattle when Sihanouk soldiers arrested him and 10 others and forced them to carry ammunition to the front line. He said the commander often beat him and threatened to kill him and his parents if he tried to escape.

Chay Beay, a 13-year-old student, said he also was tending cattle when Sihanouk soldiers forced him and 13 others to carry ammunition and bury it in a stockpile. He said he was given a gun and also was told he would be killed if he did not fight. Chay lost both parents during the Pol Pot regime.

Fourteen-year-old Thiet Nem said Sihanouk soldiers forced villagers in Tavao to attend a meeting at which several children were inducted into the armed forces. "I was frightened and sent to Phnum Srok to fight," he said. Others were taught how to sow mines. Both of Thiet's parents had been killed by the Khmer Rouge.

Pep Siv, 14, said he and other children were given education classes in which Sihanouk soldiers said they must force the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. He said they were told the enemy is a person with "a Vietnamese head on a Khmer body."

According to aid officials in the

Khmer refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, it is common practice to induct children into the coalition army. In Site 2, a Khmer People's National Liberation Front camp, all boys over the age of 10 own guns and know how to use them. Officials in Site 2 also confirmed that camp children are being used as porters for guerrilla soldiers and some have taken part in the fighting.

In Site B, a Sihanouk camp, some 600 students were recently taken for paramilitary training, according to aid officials, and their whereabouts were unknown. When questioned by aid officials, camp authorities assured them that the students were not involved in military activities or being used as porters. The camp authorities said they were being given "civil-defense-like instruction," according to the officials.

But after decades of bitter conflict, Cambodia's children have known nothing but war. Said one father who recently lost a six-year-old son to a land mine, "Pol Pot killed my wife and five children—now the Khmer Rouge have killed my only son. Is Cambodia never to have a future without killing?"

—Larry Jagan

martial air. But that hasn't stopped Father George Clements of Chicago's Holy Angels Church. Clements has made a national name for himself by declaring war on drug paraphernalia and its retailers. On the anniversary of King's birth, Clements proclaimed, "If Dr. King were alive today, he would be leading the crusade against drug abuse." Clements' statement was immediately parroted by Illinois Attorney General Neil Hartigan. In addition to promoting his own campaign for governor, Hartigan is pushing legislation that would outlaw the sale of drug paraphernalia. The law also would allow for the creation of statewide grand juries empowered to seize the profits and properties of anyone indicted for drug dealing. Hartigan estimates that this new law could reap Illinois \$20 million a year. That money, says Hartigan, "will go to law enforcement, where it is desperately needed and will be available right away without lengthy and needless delays before conviction." Anyone for summary execution?

Perils of the papal pulpit

Father Clements' just-say-no-to-drug-paraphernalia campaign has its corollary in the Catholic Church's just-say-no-to-sex contraceptive technique. Neither works. In fact, the Church's anti-contraception stance appears to have quite an unintended effect. According to a study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, Catholic women are 30 percent more likely than Protestant women to become pregnant and to remedy those pregnancies with abortions.

Roll over. Play dead. Good boy.

George Bush has just celebrated his first year in office. And what a pleasant year it has been. Never mind the policies—what a difference it makes having a nice guy for president. Terry Eastland reports in *The American Spectator* that Bush has become his own press secretary—a president for all journalists. Eastland writes, "During the transition, [press secretary Marlin] Fitzwater drafted a press strategy for Bush that urged him to employ his personal ability to make people—in this case, reporters—feel comfortable and to meet with the press in a variety of ways, and often. ... The press conference is a time when Bush can be Bush. He is relaxed. He rambles. He is good-natured. ... Bush does plenty of other things to strengthen his relations with the reporters who cover him. The low-key interview is one. Last spring, for example, Bush invited Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times*, Paul Duke of the Public Broadcasting System, R.W. Apple of the *New York Times* and columnist Georgie Anne Geyer to the White House for barbecue sandwiches and iced tea. 'We learned quite a bit about him,' says Nelson, 'and got a couple of good stories.' Bush also will seek out reporters to offer some on-the-spot remarks. He'll jog with those who jog and invite reporters to watch movies. And journalists are among the many Americans who receive his handwritten notes. ... Bush does not make the cardinal error politicians often make—of viewing reporters as one undifferentiated mass. ... When Bush heard NBC's Tom Pettit was getting married, he invited Pettit and his fiancée and a group of their friends to the residence to lift a toast. Bush knows that reporters are human beings, too. As for how reporters view Bush, the answer—not surprisingly—is that they rather like him." Down boy.

Words of wisdom

One of the cardinal rules of politics is to remember that there is a big difference between being a nice guy and a good man. More than 25 years ago the *Texas Observer* wrote an editorial endorsing Sen. Ralph Yarborough (D-TX) over his youthful challenger George Bush. It read in part: "Let us look steadily on this man George Bush, outwardly so graceful and amiable, who is asking to be our senator. ... Presenting himself as 'responsible,' he says his conservatism is 'compassionate,' yet he has so little sensitivity for the feelings of the needy aged he wittily compares medical care for the aged with a federal program to air-condition shipholds for apes and baboons, a program which he has dubbed 'medical air for the caged.' ... However nice a guy Bush is, however much he sends out young matrons who are not well-informed on issues, this is no responsible politician; this is a product and creature of the extremist-infected atmosphere of the Texas Republican Party."

News clips, memos, press releases, reports, anecdotes, raw gossip—send them all to "In Short," c/o *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Please include your address and phone number.



Despite pressure from leading Democrats, Jesse Jackson says no to D.C. mayoral race.

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Drug war politics smokes Marion Barry

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

THE SAME EVENING THAT WASHINGTON MAYOR Marion Barry was being busted for smoking crack, neighboring Prince George County Council Chairman James M. Herl, a white Italian-American, allegedly gave a half-gram of cocaine to an undercover policewoman. The next day Herl's fellow council members unseated him.

But media headlines aside, Barry's undoing was far more significant than Herl's. Barry, first elected in 1978, was a major civil-rights leader and a widely acknowledged success during his first term as mayor. Since 1984, his administration had been mired in scandal and corruption, and Barry himself had increasingly ceded actual operations to the city administrator. His arrest revealed the extent to which he had fallen.

Barry's arrest also has raised questions about the role of the U.S. attorney, appointed by a Republican administration, in policing the affairs of a mostly black, Democratic city. Even if one thinks that Barry deserved to be driven out of office, it must still be asked whether he deserved to be driven out by local voters or by the U.S. attorney.

Selective prosecution: The FBI's interest in the Barry administration dates back to 1983, when former President Ronald Reagan appointed Joseph diGenova U.S. attorney for the district. Since then, at least 10 FBI agents have been assigned to investigate the Barry administration. Up to Barry's arrest, the results of the investigation clearly warranted the FBI's attention.

Eleven Barry administration officials, including two deputy mayors, were convicted of corruption, and at least 11 others were forced to resign. One major official is facing trial this May. But Barry himself eluded diGenova and diGenova's successor, Jay

Stephens. And when Stephens finally nabbed Barry last week it was not for political corruption but for cocaine possession—a misdemeanor not usually the target of a large-scale FBI sting operation.

The U.S. attorney and the FBI justify their action on the grounds that Barry's arrest was part of an ongoing corruption investigation that would result in more serious charges down the road. By arresting the mayor they expected that other city officials who had refused to testify against him in the past would now come forward.

But the mayor's arrest may be a reflection of frustration rather than guile. They couldn't get Barry on a felony corruption charge so they got him on a minor charge that would create a major public furor because of the Bush administration's war on drugs and Barry's own professed militancy on the issue. Barry would be tried and convicted in the press—not a proper use of the U.S. attorney's office.

The plan: If Barry had not been caught by the FBI, he would have run for re-election—his announcement was expected on January 21—and probably would have won. He faced a divided field and had already raised more than \$300,000. Around City Hall, district employees are still speculating that Barry might return home from West Palm Beach and announce his campaign. But the U.S. attorney can probably prevent that by threatening Barry with a perjury prosecution for testifying before a grand jury last year that he had never used drugs with former official Charles Lewis—a contention Lewis has contradicted.

Barry's popularity stemmed partly from his sterling past and some initial successes as mayor. But it also depended on several less-wholesome factors. Beginning in the early '80s, Barry and his lieutenants attempt-

ed to construct the same kind of political machine in Washington that the late Mayor Richard J. Daley built in Chicago. (Ironically, Barry's political adviser Ivanhoe Donaldson began pressing this strategy after he returned in November 1983 from advising Chicago's anti-machine mayoral candidate

WASHINGTON

Harold Washington.) Like Daley, Barry courted corruption by using city contracts to reward friends and punish enemies. Two Barry associates will go to trial this year for promising city contracts to a Washington consulting firm set up secretly by the FBI in exchange for contributions to Barry's 1986 mayoral campaign.

The mayor also built a loyal army of 60,000 city workers, who constitute a sixth of the district's electorate. This constituency performed its political duties well, ensuring loyalty to Barry. But as the years passed, it performed its primary function—government service—with increasing ineptitude. The district's public housing became a continu-

They couldn't get Barry on a felony corruption charge, so they got him on a minor charge that would create a major public furor because of Bush's war on drugs and Barry's own professed militancy on the issue.

ous scandal, its top-heavy school system was a travesty and its ambulance and police services were constantly under attack. Barry's machine had become an obstacle to, rather than a vehicle for, public service.

Barry did his best to exploit Washington blacks' fear of a white takeover. Many blacks believed that whites, working primarily through the *Washington Post*, had a "plan" to restore white rule to the city. After the Ramada Inn incident, the *Washington Afro-American* editorialized, "The game plan seems to be to push Barry to the brink, where he either resigns before the end of his term or he can't run again. Haven't you heard? D.C. is going to have a white mayor the next time around and Barry is in the way."

The mayor fanned the flames of paranoia, constantly reminding his followers that if he were forced to resign, white City Council Chairman David Clarke, a civil-rights veteran himself, would automatically become mayor. And Barry benefited from its corollary—a blind overestimation of his own standing and integrity, even after there were substantial grounds to harbor doubts about both.

Barry's arrest has understandably reinforced fears of "the plan." On a black talk-radio show the day after Barry's arrest, the host and listeners talked seriously about the prospect of whites sending blacks to concentration camps in the near future. Eventually these more exaggerated fears of white conspiracy will abate, but the conditions that created them may not.

Jackson for mayor? With Barry seemingly out of the race, Jesse Jackson is being pressured to run. Many of Barry's key backers now want to latch onto a new winner who can protect their own standing in the city government. Several important Democratic Party officials, including Democratic Party Chairman Ron Brown, want Jackson to run—they don't want him to play the role of spoiler in the 1992 presidential primary. And they argue persuasively that if Jackson wants one day to be president, he has to prove that he can govern as well as orate.

Most opinion polls indicate that Jackson, who denies any intent to run but lately with less conviction, could easily defeat other Democratic opponents and former policy chief Maurice Turner, whom Republican Party Chairman Lee Atwater helped recruit as the Republican nominee.

Would Jackson make a good mayor? As a leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Operation PUSH, Jackson was never highly praised for his administrative skills, but he clearly has the ability to inspire. He could also do more than any other politician to restore the city's tarnished image—a serious problem given the city's dependence on Congress for part of its operating budget.

But if Jackson were to become mayor, he might be unwilling to dismantle the political machine Barry created. Jackson spent a decade fighting Chicago's Daley, but as suggested by his famous "it's our turn" statement during Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign, he may have been less interested in destroying the machine than in replacing Daley and his ethnic cronies.

Jackson has never been averse to a politics based on hero worship. He encourages not merely loyalty but devotion as well—not necessarily what the district needs. At this point Washington needs not only inspiration but serious reform. □

By Daniel Lazare

NEW YORK

THE NORTHEAST HAS CAUGHT A WHIFF OF the Texas disease. Since around the October 1987 stock-market crash, real estate in the Boston-New York axis has shifted dramatically into reverse.

Following five years of virtual gold rush, housing prices have fallen 20 percent or more, unsold condos are piling up like grain in Midwestern silos and consumer spending is turning stagnant. The staid old Bank of Boston, which once looked down its nose at Texas lenders for giving money to fly-by-night wildcatters, has had to write off \$720 million in bad loans, mostly to fly-by-night condo developers and other builders. Stamford, Conn., a boom town for corporate offices in the early '80s, is now stuck with a

HOUSING

Houston-sized vacancy rate of 30 percent, while, in Long Island, the town of Rockville Centre is trying to prevent panic selling by charging homeowners a \$60 fee for every for-sale sign they put up.

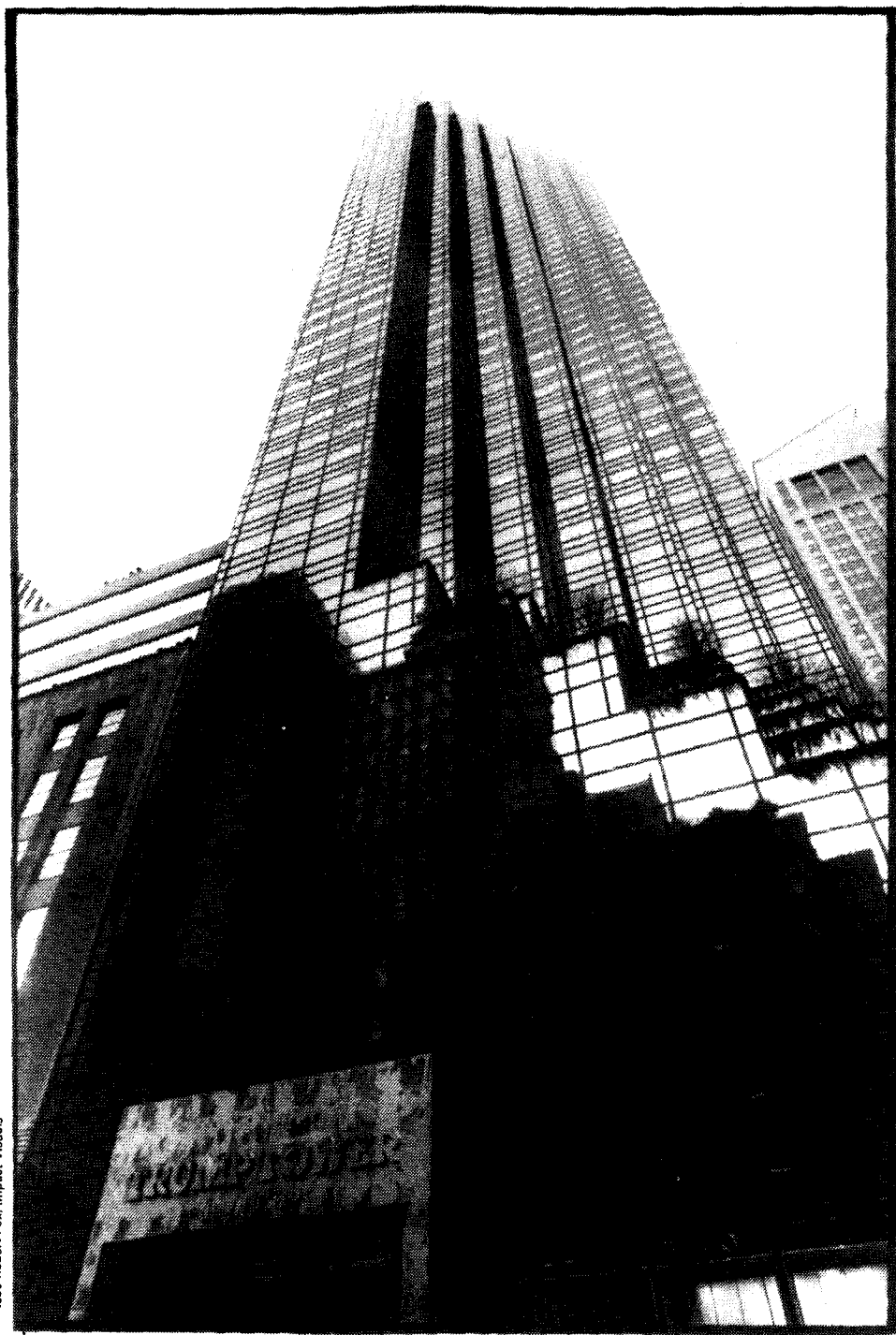
In Manhattan, the mood is particularly glum. Instead of tales of cooperative apartments going from \$25,000 to \$1 million-plus in 20 years or less, the talk these days at middle-class gatherings is of co-ops that refuse to sell, entire buildings sliding into bankruptcy and newly elected Mayor David Dinkins's tax troubles, both the city's and his own. The *New York Times*, usually the last to notice such things, has begun running worried articles about co-op defaults, while *Barron's*, the Dow-Jones financial weekly, has turned positively mournful.

"The recession in real estate has ominous implications," a *Barron's* headline announced in mid-December, whereupon the stock market signaled its agreement the next day by plunging 50 points.

Indebted to the '80s: Indeed, the decline is ominous, both regionally and nationally, financially and politically. First, it is evidence that the Northeast can no longer expect to prosper as it did in the '80s by buying, selling and multiplying the national debt. Second, it indicates that the doomsayers who predicted financial meltdown due to junk bonds or a Third World debt moratorium (this writer among them) may have looked too far afield. The real fault line might actually run through America's collective backyard in the form of \$2.3 trillion in increasingly ill-secured mortgage debt.

Third, residential real estate is not simply a market but the prime focus of U.S. social policy since long before the New Deal. Thanks to a range of federal subsidies from the home-mortgage tax deduction to direct investment in suburban infrastructure, homeownership has grown over the post-war period—but the proportion of money funneled into private residential investment has grown even faster. As a result, the private residential sector has expanded to the point where the part threatens to swallow the whole of the U.S. economy. With their rec rooms, finished basements and two-car garages, middle-class homeowners are palatially housed by West European standards. If so, however, it's only because social services, urban amenities, and, increasingly, industrial investment have been sacrificed along the way.

As the housing bubble has risen, moreover, signs of distress have accumulated at the base, e.g. homelessness, rising indebtedness and an increasing number of



New York's Trump Tower: some '80s speculators bought high-priced "chump towers."

East Coast real estate after the (fool's) gold rush

workers forced to drive hours each day because they can't afford to live closer to work. As the unraveling of real estate continues—one Wall Street firm, Comstock Partners Inc., has made headlines by predicting that prices could plummet 50 percent before it's over—the pressures on the system are likely to increase. The result could be a form of capitalist *perestroika* as Americans confront federal housing policies so badly skewed as to make Soviet agriculture seem like a model of balanced economic planning.

Although still fairly moderate, the declines have been stunning compared to the torrid increases of 1985-87. Outside Hartford, where some houses quadrupled from 1983 to 1988, prices are off by as much as 25 percent. In New Jersey, where homes appreciated as much as 30 percent per year, prices have fallen 10 to 20 percent since 1988, according to a Rutgers University study, while some condominiums are off by a third.

"One of my students bought a condo for \$205,000 right before the crash," James Hughes, a Rutgers professor of urban planning, told *In These Times*. "Recently, he saw the same unit listed at \$145,000."

"People went crazy," added Walter Barnes, a Texas-trained economist who helps man-

age a real-estate investment fund for Travelers Insurance. "It was like tulip bulbs or the stock market. They lost all sense of rationality. They used the immediate past to extrapolate forever into the future, and that never happens."

Just as Dutch speculators in 1637 bid up rare tulip bulbs to where they equaled the prices of small estates, realtors in late 20th-century New England confidently predicted that a \$75,000 house in 1983 would reach the million-dollar range by the early '90s. Now, says Barnes, the market is clogged with unsold houses, while new arrivals are discovering that they can rent for as little as half of what it costs to own.

In Massachusetts, the bust has set off political tremors, throwing the state budget into deficit, sparking widespread cutbacks in social services and delivering the coup de grace to Michael Dukakis's political career. In New York, stagnant real-estate taxes and other signs of economic deceleration have thrown a monkey wrench into the plans of Gov. Mario Cuomo, who must figure out a way to run for re-election this year and for president in 1992 while coping with a projected \$2 billion state deficit. In New Jersey, the state's largest savings and loan has been

taken over by the government, motorists are furious over rising auto-insurance rates and the new Democratic governor, James Florio, is trying to figure out the least painful way to raise taxes.

Trump-eting the transformation: It is Manhattan, however, where the great real-estate boom was particularly grotesque and where the decline is likely to be most painful. Beginning around 1976-77, rising property values swept up entire neighborhoods and transformed them from slums to yuppie redoubts in a matter of years. The boom swelled the egos of super-developer Donald Trump and hoteliere-cum-tax cheat Leona Helmsley and catapulted them into national prominence.

It also transformed the lives of Leona's "little people" as well. Presuming they were able to scrape together a down payment, those lucky enough to have their rental apartments go co-op in the golden years of the early '80s watched their equity quadruple or quintuple nearly overnight. New arrivals who bought in at the proper time were also able to ride the crest.

On the other hand, the boom made life for New York's poor even worse. By driving out what was left of manufacturing, rising property values eliminated employment prospects for an entire generation of unskilled blacks and Hispanics just entering the job market. Relentless budget cuts by the Koch administration forced thousands off the welfare rolls. Large-scale conversions of cheap rental units and single-room-occupancy hotels displaced thousands more.

Combined with a booming underground drug market, the result has been crime, homelessness, a spreading AIDS epidemic among intravenous drug users, and, even more nightmarish, threats that AIDS may also be spreading among the city's legion of crack addicts. Despite this cascade of social problems, rising deficits due to stagnant real-estate taxes and other revenue sources have prompted Dinkins to cut social programs precisely when they're needed most. Declining social conditions further undermine real estate, which, through the much-vaunted wealth effect, further undermines discretionary spending.

The bottom line, as they say on Wall Street, is more empty storefronts, the continued high level of fallout among neighborhood restaurants, less business for theaters and clubs and less revenue for the city overall. Prospects for improvement, moreover, are bleak.

"Things are much worse now," compared to the 1975 fiscal crisis, said longtime political hand Ed Costikyan. "No question about it. Back then we had no homeless, no major drug problem. Today the schools are a disaster, and we've got social problems coming out the ear."

Whereas New York was rescued in the '70s by both inflation—which effectively reduced the municipal debt—and boom times on Wall Street, today, Costikyan added, there appears to be no such white knight to sweep the city off its feet.

In the beginning: In order to understand where real estate is heading in the U.S., it's necessary to understand where it's been. Difficult as it is to imagine, real estate was rarely the cash cow that it was in the post-war period. As Comstock Partners' Michael Aronstein told *Barron's* in 1988, "Anyone buying urban land in the latter third of the 19th century probably didn't live long enough to see it appreciate."

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East German protesters equate SED-PDS leader Gregor Gysi (center) with Nazi forces.

Berlin Wall not the only rubble in East Germany

By Gordon Lewis

EAST BERLIN

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE GERMAN Democratic Republic (GDR) is growing increasingly volatile with each passing day as *In These Times* goes to press. While opposition groups and the coalition government led by the Communist Socialist Unity Party (SED) gather around the "round table" to debate, an angry population is taking to the streets. Workers are staging warning strikes, and factory bosses are withholding production and refusing to pay taxes.

Nobody appears in control. No one has produced even a vague plan to master the problems at hand. Even the newly formed Social Democratic Party (SPD)—although closely linked to policymakers in its West German sister party—has failed to formulate a convincing strategy. The peaceful October revolution, already radicalized in the wake of revelations of widespread party corruption, has taken yet another bitter and aggressive turn. In Leipzig, the organizers of the now traditional Monday marches have relinquished their leading role, leaving the field to more brutish elements. Each day as many as 2,000 East Germans seek asylum in the West, seeing little future in the reform process as it now stands. The average citizen has concluded that the logical road to recovery is the road that leads to reunification.

So what's gone wrong? Why is the GDR not capable of moving in a direction similar to Hungary's? After all, East Germany has by far the most promising economic foundations among the East Bloc countries. The answer has begun to dawn on people in the first weeks of 1990. The revolution is not

complete. Despite the sweeping away of the old guard and the promises of reform as expressed in a change of party name from SED to SED-PDS (Socialist Unity Party—Party of Democratic Socialism), the party remains a state within a state.

Across the country, SED-PDS cadres still sit in the same offices they occupied before the events of October and November and are unwilling to relinquish their preferred

EAST BLOC

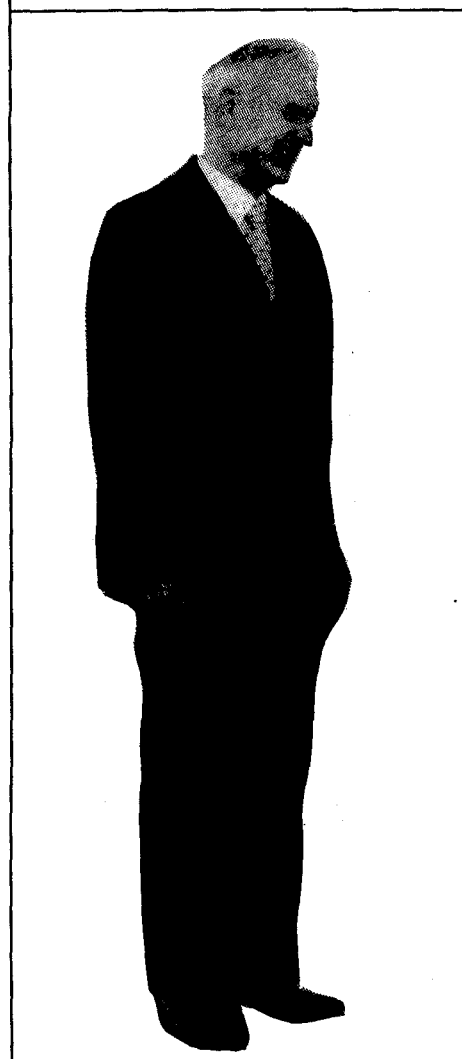
status. The abolition of the constitutional clause guaranteeing the party's leading role in society did not alter this fact. Even after the departure of Erich Honecker, the SED-PDS remains a huge political force with enormous economic clout. The party still owns import-export firms, publishing houses and most media-related industries. Thus if the opposition wants to print a newspaper, they must work with their political opponents. Under these circumstances, opposition leaders argue, no fair election can occur. Most in the GDR agree that the SED-PDS must part with much of its wealth, but nobody really knows how to prompt such an action and then enforce it.

Shifting winds: After a few weeks of feigned penance and solemnly sunken heads, conservatives in the SED-PDS went on the offensive in early January. Aware of their overwhelming advantage, the party tried to gain control of public debate. Using the growing wave of enthusiasm for reunification for its own purposes, it began a campaign against "the right-wing threat," not so subtly linking reunification, which even the East German SPD has accepted as a long-

term goal, to neo-Nazism.

On January 3, the colossal Soviet War Memorial in the East Berlin district of Treptow was reportedly attacked by vandals. Graves were destroyed and anti-Soviet graffiti sprayed on the collection of monuments built from the remains of Hitler's "Führerbunker." The GDR was shocked by these revelations. Yet this was nothing compared to the anger people felt a few days later. The SED-PDS, seeing a perfect opportunity to launch its offensive campaign, called for a demonstration. Two hundred fifty thousand

Prime Minister Hans Modrow takes the heat.



people attended and heard party leader Gregor Gysi preach about the current danger and the need for a "united front" against the right—i.e., fascism.

Old Communists in the crowd had to suppress their grins. "United front" tactics were always invoked when the Communist sway on the population was at its lowest; thus "the united front" is an admission of defeat for a doctrinaire Communist. The crudely staged demagogic exercise was a throwback to the monolithic spectacles of the Honecker era—a fact that those in attendance were painfully aware of. More important, the demonstration confirmed East Germans' deepest suspicions about the SED-PDS. It was a major political blunder.

As if the damage caused were not enough, new information leaked a few days later suggested that the party may actually have staged the attack on the memorial. First, the slogans written on the monuments were devoid of the slang typical of right-wing circles. In fact, phrases such as "For a united Europe of fatherlands" and "Smash the last people's prison—smash the USSR!" sounded like they were taken from a Stalinist agitprop textbook. One skinhead interviewed in East Berlin commented, "We would have written something like 'Kill the f----- Russki bastards.'"

Second, the vandalism at Treptow was so extensive that many people must have worked for hours to complete the job. Yet the memorial is always heavily guarded, raising the question of how the vandals escaped detection for such a length of time.

Party leader Gysi quickly labeled such accusations "absurd," and the whole issue might have remained a tempest in a teapot if the SED-PDS hadn't launched its second leg of the offensive, the reinstitution of the hated state-security apparatus STASI. To the public, restoration of a state-security ministry, be it called STASI or go by any other name, was tantamount to a restoration of the old regime. The SED-PDS' public call for its revival was political suicide.

The threat of right radicalism has existed for years. Documents in STASI offices across the country show that the government kept close tabs on potential right-wing radicals, merely hiding their existence from the general public. In many cases, far-right ideology was triggered by the gray hopelessness and depression known as "real existent socialism." But once the SED-PDS found itself up against the wall, it chose to invoke the specter of neo-Nazism.

Turn around: Opposition leaders, long suspicious that the SED-PDS did not intend to dissolve STASI, had still listened to arguments to the contrary of the government of Hans Modrow, believing Modrow was a man of integrity. The memorial incident cast the SED-PDS' call for a security apparatus in a completely different light, however, and when the round-table discussions convened on January 8, everything looked apparent. The opposition demanded a full report on the security situation, giving the government leader two hours to appear in front of the group. Luckily for Modrow, he wasn't in East Berlin to take the heat. His absence may have saved the round-table discussions: instead of pulling out of the negotiations, the opposition voted to suspend talks for a week.

In response to the imminent threat of the breakdown of the coalition, Modrow played his trump card: the threat of an immediate plebiscite to decide who should govern.

Naturally, this scared the opposition, which, divided and unschooled in the art of electoral politics, was sure to come up short in any snap poll.

Meanwhile, in a state-of-the-union address in front of the Volkskammer, East Germany's parliament, Modrow defended his call for a new security apparatus. For the government to fulfill its mission and "guarantee the safety of the people and the newly founded democratic process," it had to be granted the

Nobody appears in control. No one has produced even a vague plan to master the problems at hand. Even the newly formed SPD has failed to formulate a convincing strategy.

"equipment" to get the job done. Modrow went on to criticize the "lawlessness" of the STASI and promised to hasten its dismantling, arguing that the proposed Agency of Constitutional Protection was not a successor of the STASI but a completely different type of organization aimed at safeguarding the democratic process.

Nobody in East Germany swallowed this argument, least of all the people on the streets. While Modrow spoke, thousands

gathered outside the Volkshammer, calling for the destruction of the SED-PDS and the ouster of Gysi. Alluding to the Soviet war memorial incident, they chanted: "Nero burned Rome. Hitler burned the Reichstag. Who vandalized the memorial?"

Opposition leaders told the government leader that their further support depended on the dropping of the security-agency plans. Modrow, in turn, offered to take the opposition into the government, which they rejected, not wanting to be tied in any way to a non-elected and discredited regime. With the opposition standing firm, the coalition partners wavering and the people moving angrily through the streets, the SED-PDS had no choice but to throw in the towel on January 13.

If the SED-PDS leaders thought backing down on the security issue would be enough to calm the mood of the population, they were to be gravely mistaken. On January 15, as Modrow delivered his security report to the round table, what was supposed to be a peaceful march on the STASI headquarters got out of control. The building was stormed and occupied, windows smashed and furniture quickly destroyed. "Whoever votes for the SED-PDS votes for the STASI! Whoever votes for the STASI votes for civil war!" the people shouted. DDR TV 1 interrupted its regular broadcasting with a dramatic report that began, "Democracy is in a grave state of danger."

In fact, it was the SED-PDS that was endangered, not so much by the crowds at the

STASI headquarters but by growing criticism within its own ranks. As early as January 10, deputy party leader and Dresden Mayor Wolfgang Berghofer, a young and dynamic leader—the JFK of the GDR—went public in his criticism, saying the SED-PDS was "no longer up to the burden of running the state." Two days later he openly "disagreed with much of what is called the party line." Nevertheless, Berghofer still stopped short of an open break with the party and setting up a dissident faction.

Up against the wall: The killing of the security proposal and the march on STASI headquarters changed all this. Before the eyes of its leaders, the party was splitting from top to bottom into three relatively distinct factions: the conservative old guard, Gysi and the Third Road to Socialism, and the democratic socialists.

In the days following the march, it was this last group that pushed the crisis in the party to a head by calling for the SED-PDS' dissolution. This demand was met by a groundswell of popular support, and Gysi and his party were forced to call an emergency conference to debate the issue. In a marathon session on January 20, the party voted narrowly against dissolution, which Gysi labeled "irresponsible."

After the January 20 meeting, Gysi warned that the party still faced further "disappointments, also of a personal nature, in the future." He must have known something was up, because on January 22, the morning news was interrupted with the announcement that

Berghofer and 39 major party figures had decided to leave the SED-PDS.

In a statement to the press, Berghofer explained, "Every attempt to go new directions in this party with the burden it inherited from the past is bound to strengthen many people's fears of a restoration of the SED-PDS."

His defection may prove the fatal blow to the SED-PDS, taking the PDS out of its name. All that may remain of the once-proud Socialist Unity Party may be a small sect of yesterday's Stalinists. Progressive communists are almost certain to reconstitute themselves, perhaps with Gysi at their head.

In the coming months the GDR will be dominated by the election campaign. The SPD—with massive help from its sister party in the West and, more than likely, the support of Berghofer and his Democratic Socialist faction—looks like the party to beat. But the right wing has recently formed a sister party to Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union and should be receiving large-scale logistical and material support. Neither party can win on its own, however, so either one, should it eventually try to form a government, would be dependent on the support of smaller opposition groups. But this is all future music. For the moment, the opposition movements are united by one basic goal: defeat the SED-PDS.

And after the events of the last weeks, that goal looks very attainable indeed. □

Gordon Lewis is a freelance journalist based in West Berlin.

Gorbachov

Continued from page 3
ward.

Initial Western expressions of understanding for Soviet military intervention in the Caucasus are no guarantee that Russia will gain lasting gratitude for defending "Judeo-Christian civilization" (Armenia) from the West's new enemy of choice, radical Islam. As Afghanistan and Cambodia have amply demonstrated, Western powers can abandon their prejudices whenever it comes to sapping Soviet strength. The Afghan rebels were armed by the West and Pakistan precisely with a view to destabilizing the Moslem southern tier of the Soviet Union itself. Reports that Soviet veterans of the war in Afghanistan are leading rebel units in the Caucasus indicate that this strategy has paid off.

Big bad bear: Western military establishments are revising their notions of threat assessment to justify ongoing arms buildups even in the face of a Soviet Union that is manifestly not expanding but falling apart. French Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement said recently that what counts is not "intentions" but "capability," and that however friendly its intentions, Russia is so big it is bound to remain capable of aggression, even if it loses its empire. The West must maintain deterrence against a Russia that is irremediably big and an Islamic south that is potentially hostile.

Meanwhile, the West is organizing to take over the more manageable countries of Eastern Europe in such a way as to leave the Soviet Union relatively isolated. For example, NATO allies are clamoring to ease export restrictions imposed by the secretive Paris-based Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, known as COCOM, in order to sell computers and telecommunications equipment to new markets in the East.

But the Bush administration is reportedly conditioning its assent on obliging Moscow's supposed allies in the Warsaw Pact not to pass these products on to the Soviet Union.

The one thing the Soviet Union has asked from the West is disarmament in order to be able to pursue its own reconversion. But internal troubles threaten to stall demilitarization. The rise of militant ethnic nationalism and religious-identity chauvinism is unpleasant in itself and may interact in unpredictable ways with the failure of economic reform to get off the ground.

Communism may collapse, but the dilemma of countries unable to catch up with Euro-American prosperity remains. U.S. ideology attributes the Euro-American success to a "system" that can and should be applied everywhere; the occasional country that openly rejects the system is punished. But the real problem is that the Euro-American system is the result of a complex historical process of institution-building and accumulation of wealth that simply cannot be reproduced at will.

The current joke that "communism is the shortest path from capitalism to capitalism" may not even be true. French alternative economist Alain Lipietz, back from a Moscow symposium, noted in the weekly *Politics* that "the heart of the question is that nobody knows how to get out of sovietism." The Soviet Union not only is ignorant of the market but also—and here is the paradox—knows nothing about the proper role of the state as essential coordinator of a modern market economy.

The absence of what Lipietz calls "the state"—that is, government regulations, a whole range of arbitration and coordination functions, not to mention an elaborate legal system to settle disputes and enforce rules—can mean that "freeing the economy" simply leads to chaos and corruption, as the case of China illustrates. What is called "the free

market" in 1990 requires vast complex organizational structures that do not exist in the Soviet Union. The only coordinating structure in the USSR, Lipietz pointed out, is the party. When something has to be done, only the party has the connections and knowledge of how things work to get it done.

"If they go to a multiparty system before having built a state, they'll cause the collapse of the only remaining institution which still

The West is organizing to take over the more manageable countries of Eastern Europe in such a way as to leave the Soviet Union relatively isolated.

provides a measure of coherence to the Soviet Union," predicts Lipietz.

Based on advanced capitalism, social democracy or the more theoretical democratic socialism imply institutional structures that the Soviet Union seems to lack.

Novice of reason: Several countries whose main asset was a poor population have mobilized the masses in the 20th century to try to catch up. Stalinism and Maoism were essentially mobilization societies with egalitarian features. Mobilization societies run on messianic ideology to inspire mass effort in hope of a better world. Clearly, in the Soviet Union the messianic mobilization based on Marxism-Leninism has long since run out of steam. Gorbachov's message is that the Soviet Union is now sufficiently advanced to build on reason and dialogue, hoping to rejoin Western social democrats.

Yet economic reform based on reason seems bogged down. Meanwhile, the rising

nationalisms and the Islamic revival likely to profit from strife in Azerbaijan are providing the stuff of new mobilization societies, turned against each other but dynamized.

France's foremost specialist on the Soviet Union, Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, recalls that in February 1986 Gorbachov listed among the factors favorable to his reform program the fact that the "national problem" had been solved by internationalist brotherhood. Events have been cruel. Bold reform seemed possible because the movements in the center were protected by a stable periphery. But the periphery is fleeing in all directions. That brilliant Soviet political leaders could so misjudge the situation reveals the depth of ignorance of their own country produced by generations of deception and self-deception.

Carrère d'Encausse says Gorbachov faces a tragic dilemma. Either he must let the peripheral republics go, from the Baltic to the Caucasus and Central Asia, and then carry on reforms in a Soviet Union essentially reduced to Russia. Or else Moscow must try to hold onto the empire by all means and exhaust itself in a vain struggle to suppress revolts and civil wars by military force. The first is perhaps the necessary choice, but what is necessary is not always possible politically.

Outside factors must also have their influence. The geostrategic game of the U.S. and its major allies is to plunge Gorbachov into a gigantic Lebanon by a combination of open encouragement to join the West against the South and covert military aid to the southern Islamic enemies via Pakistan, Afghan rebels and eventually Turkey. The alternative to this double game would be strong support for a global system of conflict resolution and peacekeeping through the United Nations—and this possibility is precisely what the Bush administration is doing everything to destroy. □

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Housing

Continued from page 7

If anything, depreciation was the rule: a homeowner had to constantly put money and labor back into his house in the form of maintenance and improvements just to see his investment stay even. If middle-income Americans, particularly immigrants, bought homes nonetheless, it was because a home promised long-term security, because they enjoyed putting their hands, and because homeownership got them out from under the heel of the landlords—not because it promised a financial windfall.

But that began to change with the New Deal. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) instituted the first mortgage-insurance program, while, despite the Congress of Industrial Organizations' call for stepped-up public housing, the Truman administration instituted an array of post-war programs

designed to subsidize housing by funding private interests. The consequence was mass suburbanization, which, rather than leading to homogenization and mass conformity, actually led to a form of long-term stratification. While saving widows from being thrown out into the street, for instance, the FHA exacerbated segregation, as historian Kenneth T. Jackson noted in his 1985 study, "Crabgrass Frontier," by redlining neighborhoods with so much as a single black family.

As cities fell into decline in the '50s, the urban outflow accelerated. By the late '60s, whites fleeing racially torn Newark and the South Bronx (joined, eventually, by working and middle-class blacks) were not so much people looking for a new vista as they were urban refugees.

Simultaneously, a stream of federal subsidies—tax deductions, depreciation allowances for builders, savings-and-loan guaran-

tees, direct investment in suburban infrastructure, etc.—touched off a prolonged private housing boom that disproportionately benefited the rich.

For instance, of the \$35 billion lost to the federal government in 1988 due to income-tax deductions for home-mortgage payments and state and local property taxes, approximately 23 percent wound up in the pockets of the 2 percent of taxpayers earning \$100,000 a year or more, according to John Atlas, president of the National Housing Institute, a tenants' advocacy group. With more money to spend, the well-to-do bid up housing prices to the point where they were beyond the reach of young working- and middle-class families.

The result: rising indebtedness and what John Atlas calls "the new GI loans—generous in-laws." Builders covered the landscape with amazingly ugly housing developments and shopping plazas not because they were

necessary—given a choice, most families would have preferred more compact communities with day care, parks and other services—but because the government, in effect, paid them to. As financial services and the like began prospering in the late '70s, real-estate prices within 50 miles of the New York Stock Exchange exploded. Although virtually all property owners reaped the rewards, once again the fancier estates benefited the most. The run-up in prices led to a concomitant run-up in investment as those with the means hurried to buy up brownstones, expand kitchens and add on bedrooms, or ditch their dowdy rent-controlled apartments for the privilege of investing in a shiny new co-op.

Leverage rose accordingly. As *Barron's* pointed out last month, average down payments for first-time homeowners fell from 20.7 percent of total value in 1987 to 14.6 percent just a year later. Mortgage debt as a proportion of the value of owner-occupied real estate rose from 25 percent in 1952 to 36 percent during the 1981-82 recession to 48 percent in 1989. Where once realtors advised buyers not even to think about a home with a price tag more than double their annual income, median home prices in San Francisco and Los Angeles now stand at six times median income.

Now the movie seems to be unwinding in reverse. Returning last summer from a day of house-hunting in some of the tonier reaches of Fairfield County, Conn., an investment banker noted that an estate that would cost \$100,000 a year to own could be rented for as little as 30 grand. "Those people," he laughed, "are standing on the edge of a cliff."

Unfortunately, "those people" comprise much of the property-owning American middle class.

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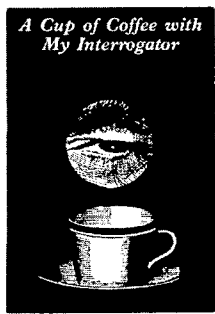
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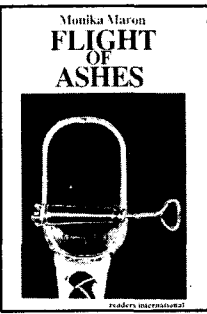
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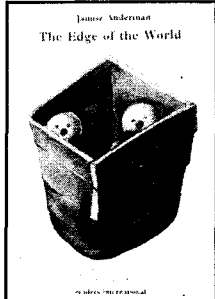
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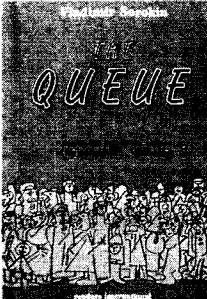
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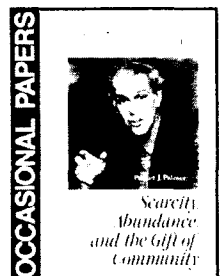
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By Joe Goldman

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

ON THE WALL OF A TYPICALLY DRAB GOVERNMENTAL office in central Buenos Aires hangs an *organigrama*—the original government organizational chart of President Carlos Saúl Menem's six-month-old Peronist administration. But the clean, orderly diagram has in recent weeks taken on the look of a convict's calendar. Every day another name of a government official is crossed out, clearly a symbol of the renewed crisis that has crippled this South American nation of 32 million.

Menem, six months ago the toast of the nation, has rarely shown his face in public since yet another period of hyperinflation began wracking Argentina early last December. During the final month of 1989, inflation rose 100 percent and the austral, the

ARGENTINA

Argentine currency, fell 75 percent against the dollar. Public approval of Menem fell from 75 percent in late November to less than 30 percent just six weeks later.

Dissension, back-biting and invectives plague the Menem Cabinet as today's golden boy on the economic team becomes tomorrow's whipping boy. In Menem's six months in office, three economy ministers, two interior ministers, three health ministers and four central bank presidents have come and gone.

The chaotic situation in Argentina also has undermined various projects initiated by the Menem administration. The promise of privatizing the monolithic state sector seems to have dissolved in the hot summer sun. To date, only two out of 118 state-owned companies have been sold, and there is growing sentiment among political observers here that the government, starved for cash, will sell any public company at any price in order to fill the now-empty reserve.

Chaos here, chaos there: The powerful labor unions, long the pillar of support behind the Peronist, or Justicialist, movement, have split into two rival factions—one for the new president and the other against him. As the government toils through yet another economic crisis and real wages are slashed by inflation, support for Menem by even Menemist labor leaders has waned.

There also have been rumblings within the military—never a good sign in this nation whose history is bathed in coups—as the rebel Carapintadas, or painted-faced militia, led by Col. Mohammed Ali Seineldin, have again begun flexing their muscles. Seineldin, who led the Dec. 19, 1988, uprising against the Alfonsín government, initially had nothing but praise for the Menem administration. After military officers accused of massive human-rights violations during the so-called dirty war were granted amnesty last October, the rebels gave the president their unabashed support.

However, as has been shown again and again in Argentina, give the rebellious military an inch and they take a mile. After leading 500 active and retired officers in calisthenics in a public park, Seineldin held a prayer session and a dinner in honor of the first anniversary of the rebellion against Alfonsín—provocative maneuvers under a newly installed administration. Seineldin was finally placed under house arrest for 10 days after he verbally lambasted Menem's army commander in an obvious act of insubordination.

As the government weakens, the rebels

Hyperinflation and restless military consume Argentina's new president



Argentina's Peronist Party has split over the installation of President Carlos Saúl Menem.

have steadily gained a foothold among the poor and members of the working class who feel defrauded by the Menemists. With this sentiment in mind, Economy Minister Antonio Erman Gonzalez—the third to take over the battered economic helm since Menem assumed office and the sixth in 1989—ushered in the new year with his second emergency economic package since he was appointed last December.

The focus of the newest package is to restrict circulation of the austral to halt speculation and the "dollarization"—the term used here to describe the increasing use of dollars rather than local currency for all forms of buying and selling—of the economy. Gonzalez claims that the government has entered into negotiations with overseas lenders and the U.S. Treasury to fortify the currency by adding to the existing reserve. He also has announced that withdrawals from short-term deposits cannot be exchanged for currency but, for now, may be remitted in government bonds denominated in dollars. In addition, Gonzalez tried to calm the tensions of the Argentine people by saying that there would be no public utility or gas price increases and that state employees would get a raise by the end of the first week in January.

The minister's New Year's message came

amid mounting pressure as Argentina wrestled with its second bout of hyperinflation in only nine months. Two days earlier Gonzalez appeared on national television to deliver a speech evidently aimed at preventing the supermarket ransacking that plagued the country during last May's inflation explosion. **No looting is good looting:** But the feared lootings never happened. As rumors

Dissension, back-biting and invectives plague the Menem Cabinet as today's golden boy becomes tomorrow's whipping boy.

of imminent price increases and product shortages spread during the final weekend of 1989, Argentines instead formed massive lines at gas stations and supermarkets just in time to hear loudspeaker announcements informing customers of 30 percent across-the-board increases on all items in the stores. Over-the-counter and prescription drugs jumped in price 200 percent in December shortly before disappearing from drugstore shelves altogether.

The first days of the new decade were filled with uncertainty as banks and currency exchanges closed in defiance of Gonzalez' commands that they remain open to the public. The Central Bank at last ceded as financial markets reopened January 4 and lines began to form on the Wall Street of Buenos Aires, commonly and somewhat derisively called "La City." By midday, a mob scene had developed, and less than two weeks later the stock market lost 44 percent of its value as Argentines fought to get their hands on hard currency. By the end of the week some banks had again closed their doors, leaving the impression that if riots result from Argentina's latest case of hyperinflation, they will be instigated by the middle class, and the banks—not the supermarkets—will fall under attack.

The first short-term indicator of economic rebound came during the first two weeks in January, as the austral surged against the dollar in a 33 percent recovery. But, according to many Argentine economists and banking officials, the general outlook is not so rosy. "The true indication will come in the next few weeks, when the short-term deposits come in," said Marcelo Zlotogwiazda, an economist and financial writer at *Pagina 12*, a center-left daily.

One Argentine banking official said that economic controls will have to remain airtight. "When it comes to finding loopholes, shortcuts and detours, the Argentines are as good as they come," he pointed out. "They can make or break this plan."

Alvaro Alsogaray, Menem's close adviser on economic matters and the leading Argentinian exponent of free-market economics, believes the newest plan will "firmly maintain itself, although not with total rigidity, and the economic team will make the necessary small adjustments as they present themselves."

Uncle Sam to the rescue? But already there are signs of large gaps in the latest economic package. U.S. diplomatic sources claim there has been no discussion concerning Argentine loans or assistance programs within the Treasury Department or any other U.S. government body. The same sources say the U.S. has taken a wait-and-see approach. This claim contradicts the economic minister's announcement that Argentina will receive a \$1.5 billion loan from U.S. reserves, and it creates serious doubts as to whether Argentina has, or can come up with, the monetary backing necessary to prop up the austral. Furthermore, a clause in government regulations against withdrawing australs from short-term deposits allows companies to withdraw cash needed to meet monthly payroll expenses. These same companies have long been granted exemptions from financial laws, creating havoc within the country's economy and giving no one reason to believe they've abandoned their old habits and will now hand over profits in the national interest.

In mid-December, after the original economic package installed by Gonzalez' predecessor crumbled, Menem introduced the second package with a dark warning, declaring, "We are all on this flight and there are no parachutes. After this—the abyss." □

Joe Goldman is a freelance writer living in Argentina.

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LIFE, LIBERTY

A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED

By Bruce Shapiro

ACROSS THE STREET FROM CONNECTICUT Judge Anthony DeMayo's courtroom lies a venerable symbol of New England community, the New Haven Green. The green's sweeping expanse of grass, its scattered trees and the three Protestant churches that have resided on it since the 17th century have all borne witness to 350 years of New Haven's rise and fall as a seaport and industrial center. But today that sense of history is overwhelmed by distinctly '80s phenomena: noontime rifle fire aimed at a youthful drug dealer and homeless people like Herbert Hilton seeking refuge on the green's benches and occasionally freezing to death there.

Hilton first walked into DeMayo's courtroom last spring after he lost his spot in a temporary housing shelter. In early January, following months of arguments and pleadings, he walked out with what he wanted: a declaration that housing is a civil right in the nation's wealthiest state. It was one of the first rulings of its kind in the country.

DeMayo's domain is Housing Court, generally devoted to such pathetically circumstantial disputes as evictions. In a passionate and controversial series of rulings, including *Hilton et al. vs. City of New Haven*, DeMayo has found that Connecticut citizens have a legal right to shelter—and that towns are responsible for it. He has driven budget-conscious government officials to distraction by reinstating state emergency-housing funds for families, ordering the creation of two new shelters, threatening officials with contempt for not acting fast enough and stepping from behind the safety of the bench to lecture merchants and newspapers about their responsibilities.

In the short run, DeMayo's rulings have literally saved lives. But that short-term relief conceals foundation-shaking import: a direct extension of civil rights from the political to the economic realm. DeMayo is the

latest and boldest in a series of state judges around the nation to suggest that a roof over one's head is as essential to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as voting.

Model city to model disaster: To understand the weight of DeMayo's rulings one need only look at the recent history of New Haven—a “model city” in the '60s and '70s, the laboratory for liberal visions of urban renewal. Today it's just as emblematic of the urban disasters of the '80s. For years, the city received more federal aid per capita than any municipality in the U.S. But instead of an urban renaissance, the past decade brought a radical shortage of affordable housing and a consequent rise in homelessness. In 1985 the city of 126,000 had one non-profit shelter for homeless adults and one shelter for homeless families, each with about 50 beds. By the end of 1989, New Haven had four shelters for homeless single adults with nearly 300 beds among them and hundreds of families in state-funded emergency-housing programs. City Hall itself estimates that altogether New Haven has some 3,000 homeless residents—two New Haveners in every hundred.

It was a crisis brought on, in part, by the very urban planners who thought they were reviving the city. As in cities around the country, downtown single-room-occupancy housing was redeveloped in the early '80s and not replaced; luxury office space was built, subsidized with tax abatements; rampant condominium development and unregulated speculation more than doubled housing prices in three years. Today New Haven has the highest office-space vacancy rate in the U.S. Hundreds of condo units, made possible by acrobatic and enthusiastic bending of city zoning laws, are unsold, their developers waiting for state bailouts or economic turnaround. There were other causes, too—regional economic trends, inadequate state poverty and housing programs, federal cutbacks—but one fact is indisputable: at the end of the decade, the “model city” had the largest homeless population of any New England community outside of Boston.

Homelessness first moved center stage in DeMayo's courtroom in 1988. State officials put a 100-day limit on the stays of homeless

women and children in “emergency housing,” consisting mostly of motor lodges turned welfare motels. The officials say their intent was to end an unworkable program and shift funds to permanent housing—but there was no substitute for the motels in place. In a booming real-estate market, New Haven had no more affordable housing for those families at the end of their 100 days than at the start. Lawyers from the New Haven Legal Assistance Association went to DeMayo to ask for help, and he obliged with an injunction keeping the program going.

Last spring, the same Legal Assistance lawyers, Shelly White and Amy Eppler-Epstein, brought a second case to DeMayo, this time on behalf of Hilton and a half-dozen other homeless men who had spent the winter in a temporary shelter established by the city of New Haven. That “overflow” shelter—created when it became clear that New Haven's existing shelters couldn't keep up with the swelling ranks of the homeless—occupied a vacant building owned by the *New Haven Register*, the city's daily newspaper. With the coming of warmer weather, officials reasoned, the “emergency”—the risk of homeless people freezing to death or occupying the newly renovated train station—had passed, so the substantial funds involved in running the shelter could be shifted elsewhere. The *Register*, too, wanted to see the shelter shut down. The newspaper had sold the building and couldn't close its deal until the temporary settlers were evicted.

That was when White and Eppler-Epstein stepped in. They argued that the abrupt closing would put the shelter's otherwise homeless residents in danger. DeMayo issued a temporary order to keep it open. After several weeks of wrangling, in which the *Register's* chief executive officer threatened to evict the shelter if it wasn't

moved, DeMayo ordered city officials to find another site that could hold the shelter for keeps.

Life, liberty and a place to live: To seek a permanent solution, White and Eppler-Epstein set on the novel strategy of obtaining a sweeping injunction requiring the city to permanently provide shelter for all homeless residents within its boundaries. As they delved further into the case, courtroom arguments suddenly transcended a single shelter and a single city. The lawyers called to the witness stand housing experts, elected officials, a historian and 350 years of state history. Their argument—eventually adopted with a vengeance by DeMayo—rests on a single clause of Connecticut's General Statutes. DeMayo himself read it in a booming voice one afternoon as a rebuke to a City Hall attorney: any indigent resident “shall be provided for and supported at the expense of the town in which he resides.”

That doesn't say anything directly about shelter. But, the lawyers argue, behind that small clause is a larger document, the state constitution, which guarantees to citizens the “liberties, rights and privileges which they have derived from their ancestors.”

And those “derived” rights, argue White and Eppler-Epstein, include a right to housing. Two days of court hearings were devoted to testimony from Connecticut's official state historian, Christopher Collier, about the place of shelter in Connecticut history. According to Collier, each of the state's towns was responsible for its poor and indigent residents as far back as 1692. The 18th and 19th centuries brought town-supported almshouses. Whatever the failings of such institutions, he argued, they at least signified community responsibility for the poor. “Any person in Connecticut from the 1640s forward had a right to expect humane care if he fell on hard times,” Collier says, “including food, clothing and shelter.”

Interestingly, legal precedent for relying on “derived” rights comes from a social struggle of another sort—women's access to abortion. In the early '80s the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union won poor women the right to Medicaid funds for abortion by arguing, in part, that those “privileges derived

from our ancestors" included the expectation of medical care. "It only makes sense to extend it to housing," says Eppler-Epstein.

That novel argument found a sympathetic set of ears in DeMayo. The son of a post-office worker, a Yale graduate in George Bush's class, a reform Republican in the Lowell Weicker tradition, DeMayo was a career public defender when first appointed to the bench in 1981. As a public defender, he hired the first woman lawyer in the state judiciary in 1974. Shortly after his appointment to the state bench in 1981 he became known as a hell-to-the-hindmost judicial scrapper not likely to shy away from a bold assertion of principle. In 1983, amid much publicity, he refused prosecutors' demands to jail a prostitute with AIDS. He gained notoriety when, as a grand juror investigating a corruption case, he threatened uncooperative witnesses with handcuffs and contempt.

Since being assigned to Housing Court two years ago, he has been stubbornly insistent on keeping officials as securely on the hook as possible. "It's really a matter of conscience for him," says one colleague on the bench. "He's taking a very hard line on these homeless cases so that anyone who wants to overturn his rulings will have to face the issue head on."

Charity or justice? Ironically enough, the unhappy task of arguing with DeMayo fell to a veteran Legal Assistance lawyer who a few years ago moved over to City Hall. Assistant Corporation Counsel Edward Mattison, who represented the city in the case, had been an advocate for the poor for years. Just last year he helped craft a much-praised citywide plan for the distribution of services to the homeless. His exasperation as he mulls over the housing-rights case is borne of the genuine conviction that it is a wrong-headed strategy.

In particular he snorts at that vision of a beneficent Connecticut past. "As I recall, those same laws allowed children to work



Connecticut Judge Anthony DeMayo: among the first to declare housing a civil right.

in the mills," Mattison says. "I'd say that a system that would allow a seven-year-old to work in the mills is hardly generous to the poor." And he's not impressed by the 19th-century notion of charity embodied in the almshouse. Critical legal scholarship, he points out, regards the "poor laws" not as an attempt by government to provide succor to the poor but a way to evade broader responsibility for the just distribution of wealth.

Mattison cites one simple reason that cities and towns shouldn't be responsible for their homeless residents: "It's impossible." First and foremost, he says, large cities like New Haven lack the financial ability to pay for such mandatory services. And even if the money were there, "homelessness" itself is the wrong standard by which to mea-

sure economic justice. Whether someone is homeless, he told DeMayo, "is not self-evident." There's no simple criterion, he says. Some people are homeless by choice, some have left their spouses, some suffer mental illness or are trapped in substance abuse, some have been priced out of the market. "There's no such animal" as a generic homeless person entitled to a uniform standard of shelter, he says.

Both sides agree that the case illuminates what needs to be the real focus of any solution to the housing crisis: regionalism. Nearly half the population of New Haven falls below the poverty line. Yet the city gets little cooperation in dealing with the housing crisis from wealthy suburban neighbors. The city's defenders point out that New Haven already spends more on homeless-related programs than the rest of Connecticut's cities put together. So where is the justice in making housing a municipal responsibility?

The ready embrace of trickle-down policies by municipal development officials created today's housing crisis as much as any single factor, so it is largely the responsibility of cities to remedy it. The job could be tackled through a sort of reverse version of free-market economics. If the cities were

forced to provide housing, they would have to turn to the state. The state, in turn, would have to tap its wealthier residents for the resources.

DeMayo issued his final ruling in early January. While stepping just shy of declaring housing a constitutional right—state law requires that judges decide cases on the narrowest grounds possible—he found that the notion that impoverished residents "shall be provided for" means exactly what it says. And he found all those historical precedents cited by Collier more than adequate. There are times, he wrote, "when the political system fails" in its social responsibilities, and "this is one of those times."

New Haven's newly elected mayor, John Daniels, plans to appeal the ruling to the state Supreme Court. Earlier this year, that court heard the state of Connecticut's appeal to DeMayo's first decision on cutting off shelter assistance.

Although the Hilton case cannot, by itself, solve the housing crisis in New Haven or elsewhere, it vividly illuminates the issues behind the housing crisis nationwide: the evasive wrangle over responsibility, and the division between those who believe housing should be an inherent right and those who think it must be addressed through economic remedies rather than the simple provision of shelter. It also shows the potential for pursuing economic rights at the state level during a period of federal retrenchment. At a minimum, DeMayo's precedent-setting rule and the legal strategy behind it make the simple, clear statement that economic needs like housing can rest comfortably in the spirit of civil rights. □

Bruce Shapiro, co-founder and former editor of the *New Haven Independent*, is a contributor to *Building Bridges: Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community*, forthcoming from Monthly Review Press.

EDITORIAL



It's time to end the slaughter in El Salvador

Ten years ago a death squad, led by Roberto D'Aubuisson, the founder of El Salvador's governing party, assassinated Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Two months ago another death squad, made up of members of the Atlacatl battalion, which was created by the U.S. Special Forces in 1981, massacred six Jesuit priests and two women. In between, tens of thousands of Salvadoran civilians have been killed by their government, including 700 peasants murdered in El Mozote by the Atlacatl battalion in 1981, dozens of villagers from Tanancingo and Copapayo in 1983, and 68 in the hamlet of Los Llanitos and 50 at the Gualsinga River in 1984. To carry out this bloody carnage, the Reagan and Bush administrations have provided some \$3.4 billion over the past decade—about \$1 million a day—for a war that cannot be won and whose only purpose is to defend a corrupt army and a handful of wealthy families.

In the next weeks, Congress will once again be voting on an administration request to continue lavishing money on this band of assassins. Because of the embarrassing timing of the Jesuits' murder, however, the administration has been forced to engage in a charade designed to convince the public that it will not tolerate such behavior. "The U.S. government," Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson said last week, "sent an unequivocal message that these atrocities must not go unpunished, and that this case had to be a turning point in developing the rule of law and the judicial system of El Salvador." And, Aronson hastened to add, Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani "took a similar position." The administration, Aronson explained, "strengthened and

reinforced the position he took in investigating these crimes."

In fact, however, the administration at first attempted to divert blame for the Jesuits murder from the government to the rebels. Even though a U.S. Army major was told in December by Salvadoran Col. Carlos Amando Aviles that the army was responsible, the American ambassador to El Salvador, William Walker, told Congress on January 2 that there was no evidence the government was responsible. Instead, he suggested that the rebels had done the dirty deed disguised as government troops. Of course, the administration expressed "moral outrage" at the assassinations, but an official told the *New York Times* that it was also motivated by "hard-boiled politics." "This administration is pragmatic," he said. "We saw the handwriting on the wall. We recognized that the continuation of U.S. aid would depend on El Salvador's response to this benchmark case."

It was the vote on aid, not "moral outrage"—which the administration reserves only for well-publicized slaughters—that forced Cristiani to produce a handful of lower-ranking culprits for the slaying. The almost daily murders of less-prominent civilians are routinely ignored, except when someone in Congress indicates that they are an embarrassment that must be given cosmetic attention. As Ruben Zamora, secretary-general of the Salvadoran Popular Christian Social Movement, pointed out, the military and the right in his country are not worried about aid cutoffs. They know that U.S. protests "are public-relations ploys," and that "all they have to do is respond with nice discourses about democracy and 'concern' about the 'unknowns' who torture and murder."

We can only hope that this administration's hypocrisy about democracy in Central America will no longer be accepted by a majority in Congress. It's time to end all military aid to El Salvador. We urge you to let your representatives in Washington know how you feel about this.

Glasnost: Pandora's box of Soviet modernization

For more than 60 years—ever since the consolidation of Stalin's power in 1924 and the emergence of a "monolithic" Communist Party—all public organizations, publications, cultural institutions and social activities in the Soviet Union reflected official party policies and doctrines. The one-party state, with its monopoly on the means of communication, suppressed all political activity but its own. Civil society, the informal networks of intellectual, cultural, religious and social organizations that account for most of the public lives of citizens in democratic societies, either ceased to exist or functioned furtively and in constant fear of discovery.

Glasnost changed all that. Though not all at once and not yet fully, the Soviet people have seized the opportunities now open to them to express their long-suppressed desires for self-determination. Socialists and democrats in the West assumed this would result in an outpouring of support for democracy and equality and put an end to special privilege. And it has meant this to many Soviet citizens. There is a massive longing for a truly open and democratic society, one in which all nationalities and ethnic groups have equal rights and live in peace with each other.

But *glasnost* and the opening up of Soviet society have also revealed something else—something more pervasive. In Lithuania and the two other Baltic republics, removing the blanket of suppression has revealed a society still smarting from the indignities imposed upon it when it was swallowed up in 1940. Similarly in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the societies that have emerged are in many ways frozen in time, with the same feelings and attitudes suppressed ever since the '20s. And even in Moscow, the resurgent Russian nationalist movement is expressing itself in the terms of pre-revolutionary days.

A terrible paradox of contradictory tendencies has emerged. Along with free expression and engagement in political and social activities come narrow nationalism, traditional ethnic rivalries and hatreds, and a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Attitudes thought to be things of the past have re-emerged, precisely because they are things of a past frozen in time, characteristics of a society whose normal development was stifled by an official ideology that neither corresponded to the underlying social reality nor allowed the independent working out of social conflicts by the citizenry.

Some of these attitudes, like the separatist demands of the Baltic republics, have positive as well as negative aspects. Others, like the ethnic hatreds of the Armenians and Azeris and the resurgent anti-Semitism of Russian nationalists in Moscow and Leningrad are more suited to a semifeudal society than to one calling itself socialist. But they are the inevitable price paid for the arrested development imposed on Soviet society by the creators of its one-party state.

IN THESE TIMES

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LETTERS

Surplus domino

THE HEADLINE "THE LAST DOMINO" (ITT, JAN. 10), referring to the fall of Stalinist Eastern European governments, overlooks one bastion of totalitarian purity: Albania. Although Albania has been largely ignored by the U.S. government and the American news media, it clearly is one of the most authoritarian and centralized nation-states in the world.

Albania is largely closed to foreigners. About 20 years ago, the government, ruled by the Albanian communist party, formally the Party of Labor, compelled people to get haircuts of a certain length. Little information comes out of the country. The country's leaders follow the cult-of-personality style of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu.

In one major area, though, Albania differs from the Eastern European countries that experienced major political changes last year. The Albanian communists, led by Enver Hoxha, fought their own revolution against fascist occupation and came to power through their own means. The other East European states were all governed by parties put into power by the Soviet army. In this regard, Albania is similar to Yugoslavia, which also fought its partisan revolution.

Although the Albanian government would logically be the next one to tumble and there have been reports of riots and political unrest, the fact that it is more than a government transplanted by a foreign power could render it more immune to change. It should be noted that Yugoslavia's population has not been rebellious.

Now that Ceausescu has fallen, North Korea appears to be the only authoritarian cult-of-personality regime left that was entrenched by a foreign power.

William Volonte
Dunellen, N.J.

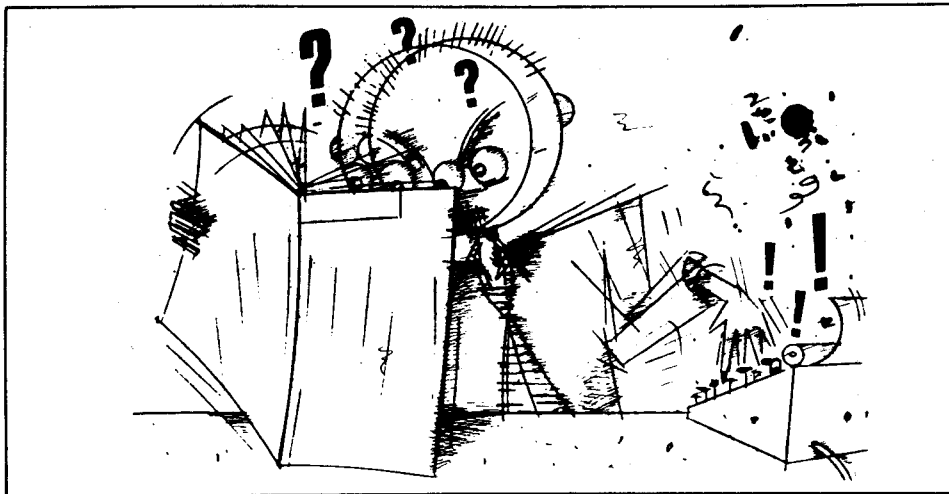
Editor's note: True, but since Albania, like Yugoslavia, has a government created by a guerrilla resistance against the Nazis in World War II, it falls outside the domino syndrome.

Impotent anti-imperialism

THE IRRELEVANCE AND IMPOTENCE OF THE AMERICAN left is further exacerbated by the knee-jerk reactions to the Panama invasion. Salim Muwakkil (ITT, Jan. 10) paints Col. Omar Torrijos and his successor Manuel Noriega as champions of the mestizo/black majority when they simply used the underclass and military as cost-effective ways to build a power base. If the downtrodden majority were so enamored of Noriega, why did they reject him in the last election? To blame U.S. support of the Endara election effort requires turning a blind eye to the vast wealth of Noriega and company and their control of the mass media. Besides, who in the left complained when U.S. money sought to prevent the election of the far-right ARENA in El Salvador?

Similarly, you stooped below even corporate media standards by repeating, in a bold-type unattributed excerpt, the unsupported claim of 7,000 civilian deaths made by a man on Noriega's payroll.

The U.S. finally dumped a dictator we created, in a way that avoided protracted military conflict. If recent history and mo-



tives were impure, at least the results have given Latin America some long-overdue justice.

John Walker
Coaldale, Colo.

Consistency

THOSE WHO READ SALIM MUWAKKIL'S ARTICLE on Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam (ITT, Dec. 13, 1989) and who protested some of the statements in it (Letters, Jan. 10) seem all too ready to focus on the appearance of anti-Semitism and to decry it, particularly Esther Geoffrey.

I have yet to see or hear equally vehement condemnation of anti-black racism or anti-Arab racism when expressed by Jews in the U.S.; nor have I heard loud and widespread protests from Americans, particularly Jews, against the racism practiced by their Jewish Israeli brethren, much of which is enshrined in the country's "administrative practices," to say nothing of its laws. If people wish to denounce bigotry and racism, let them not be so consistently selective in their focus on anti-Semitism.

As to the article, I found it most enlightening, and I especially liked the last segment of the final paragraph in Muwakkil's reply.

Edna Homa Hunt
Cambridge, Mass.

Open up your eyes

SALIM MUWAKKIL'S PIECE ON LOUIS FARRAKHAN and the Nation of Islam (NOI) (ITT, Dec. 13, 1989) produced the usual bipartisan blather in response, all about the threat of Nazis and black racism. Left out is the wretched white racism at the root of some blacks' response. But even more nagging is the willingness to accept any drivel that appears in the popular media as fact.

Letter writer Peter M. Shane (ITT, Jan. 10) makes the umpteenth repetition of a non-quote that has been heard all over mass media for years. That is, Farrakhan allegedly calling Judaism a gutter religion. Progressives, at least, should clear the wax out of their ears and the cobwebs out of their minds. Farrakhan never said this. In trashing the government of Israel for murdering Palestinians he accused it of hiding behind dirty religion. This was in the spirit of trashing a Christian nation for repeating the name of Jesus while dropping bombs on people. Of course we don't get that kind of honesty from most critics of Christian governments.

The context and actual words of the quote are unknown to all those who use it to characterize Farrakhan and the NOI as a threat to America. What bunk. Comparing

him to Hitler and the Nazis is like comparing Panama or Grenada to the U.S. Wake up, folks, and check out some religion while you're at it. Whatever one may think of Farrakhan's politics, his religion of Islam comes directly from Judaism. To trash one is to trash the other.

Frank Scott
San Rafael, Calif.

Extradition

AFTER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACK ON Panama, before Manuel Noriega was seized by U.S. forces, the claim was made over and over in the media that the U.S. has no extradition treaty with Panama. Lacking such a treaty, it was said, normal due process was not an option.

The U.S. does, however, have an extradition treaty with Panama. A moot point now, perhaps, except for what it implies about both the level of disinformation in the mainstream media and the lawlessness of the Bush administration.

The treaty can be found in Vol. 34, Part 3, of *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, page 2851.

It is an old treaty, signed in 1904. Is it still in force? Yes. The U.S. State Department publishes an annual document called *Treaties in Force*; the 1989 annual lists the extradition treaty with Panama.

The U.S. has a number of other extradition treaties just as old. The treaties with Ecuador (1873), Peru (1901), Bolivia (1902), Chile (1902) and Guatemala (1903) are examples.

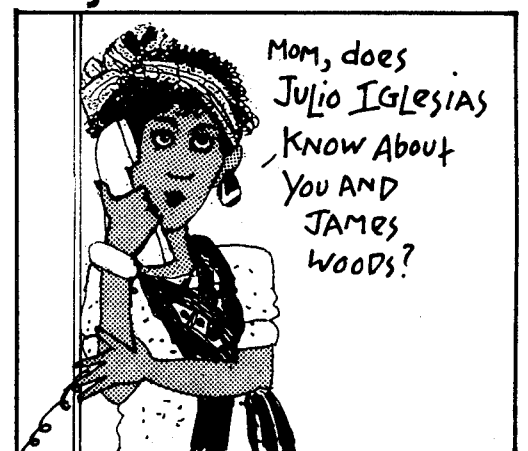
Does the treaty apply to extradition of drug offenders? Yes. In 1988 the House Foreign Affairs Committee published a document entitled *Worldwide Review of Status of U.S. Extradition Treaties and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties*. It contains a list of "Countries with which we have treaties permitting extradition of drug offenders," and included in this list, on page 21, is Panama.

Jonathan Ide
Madison, Wis.

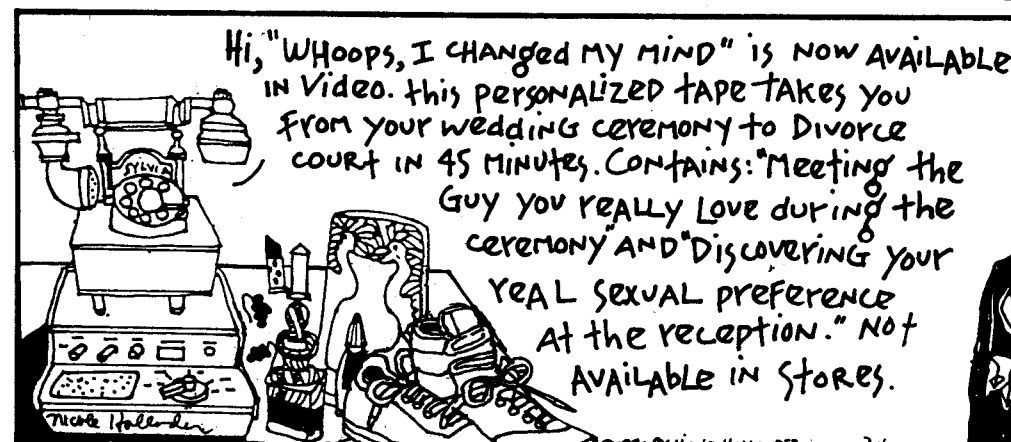
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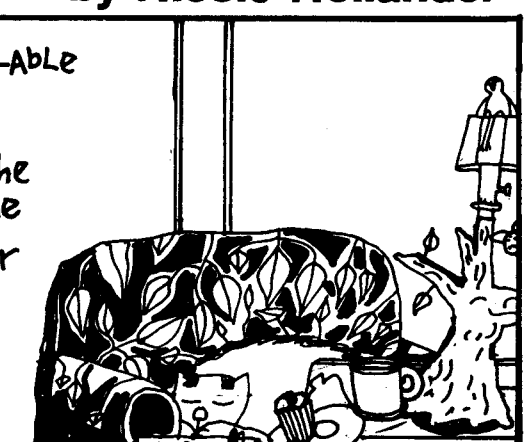
by Nicole Hollander



SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



By Gary Itzkowitz

WELFARE REFORM GENERATES INTENSE passion from both conservatives and liberals, but neither conservative myths about the "dependent" poor nor liberal compassion for their plight tells the entire story of welfare reform. The maze of analysis conducted by conservatives and liberals fails to underscore the real beneficiaries of current welfare-reform legislation—employers.

The primary goal of the curiously named Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988 is "to obtain the education, training and employment needed to avoid long-term welfare dependence." This stated purpose illuminates the magnitude of the conservative victory regarding the characterization of the poor.

Conservatives view welfare recipients, especially those of inner cities, as cultural zombies entranced by the world of poverty. The fact that the national average for combined Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and food stamp payments amounts to only 71 percent of people at the poverty line, and the average welfare spell is only two years does not penetrate the conservative myth. Children of welfare families are no more likely to enter a welfare spell than children of non-welfare families. Ninety percent of those on welfare for more than seven years live outside inner cities. Many of the long-term poor are ill, elderly or caring for someone who is ill. While facts are facts, the myths are more powerful.

The liberal rationale for poverty is also misplaced. Liberals argue social circumstances surrounding the poor are the **source of poverty**. Liberal discussions include analyses of family relations, educational dysfunction, employment practices and demographic patterns, including the decline of low-income neighborhoods. All of these are said to form a "culture of poverty." Since the problem of the lack of jobs at a living wage is not addressed, liberal solutions range from more effective education and training programs to government policies to increase employment opportunities for the disadvantaged.

Both conservative and liberal positions found a home in the welfare-reform act passed in 1988. Congress failed, however, to give adequate funding. According to the U.S. Government Accounting Office, quality education and training programs require expenditures of at least \$2,500 per participant, particularly if they are to aid those

Welfare reform business: more poverty for the poor

most in need. Unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the FSA allocates only \$745 per participant.

Gross underfunding of FSA means states will concentrate their efforts on low-cost programs such as job search. Since the implementation of low-cost programs often leads to low-wage jobs, the Congressional Budget Office issued a report in January

If poverty is perceived as originating internally, it is incumbent on the federal government to end simple financial aid and encourage the poor's transformation to self-sufficiency.

1989 stating that FSA will have little impact on helping the poor escape poverty.

Consequently, acceptance of a job after training under FSA may mean a temporary end to welfare but not to poverty. After completion of training in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)—the current flagship government education and training program—many families remain in poverty, particularly if they are headed by women and on AFDC.

Who then benefits from a welfare-to-work program where members are required to participate or risk being cut off from their welfare payments and often end up in low-paying jobs with little hope for ending their poverty? The answer is obvious: employers.

How it works: Since analysts predict a shortage of service-sector workers by the year 2000, the shrinking labor market would ordinarily create upward pressure on wages. FSA, however, would allow sizable numbers of welfare recipients to be used to expand the pool of the working poor. Higher wages for the poor may, therefore, be short-circuited. Moreover, a new pool of low-paid workers will act as a depressor on all wages. In short, the FSA could be a po-

tential boon for employers without helping those living in poverty.

This result, not surprisingly, is no accident. In testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee previous to FSA passage, Pierce A. Quinlin, on behalf of the National Alliance of Business, was straightforward about the reasons for business involvement. Business is interested in welfare reform, he said, because of growing concern about the future pool of workers. "Many businesses are looking hard for reliable, trained workers and aren't finding as many as they need."

Nor was Quinlin shy about business' increasing control over the welfare system: "Not only does the private sector have a strong interest in effective employment and training programs for welfare recipients but it has important roles to play in designing and overseeing those programs."

Quinlin points to JTPA as a glowing example of training for the poor. JTPA is coordinated through private industry councils, which by statute are business-dominated and are charged with the oversight of the entire structure of education and training for the poor. In Quinlin's words, "We have seen the private industry council, as a community institution, begin to mature and to define its role more broadly as a center of human-resource policy in the local labor market."

The employer dilemma, however, is that welfare recipients often do not possess appropriate skills even for entry-level jobs. The reasons are primarily structural. These include a reduction in manufacturing jobs and the need for low-skilled workers, a historically low minimum wage (despite recent small increases) and a rise in single parenthood throughout society, particularly among the poor.

Yet the business community, in coalition with conservative think tanks and politicians, has blamed poverty on the poor themselves. Endless propaganda on how poverty and welfare create a druglike dependency has been chronically covered in the media and pronounced in countless political speeches. This portrayal flies in the face of the short-term nature of welfare

for the majority of recipients. A recent Gallup poll showed nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population believes that welfare creates dependency within the recipients.

Getting it backward: The political characterization of the "dependent" poor has direct policy implications. If poverty is perceived as originating internally among the poor, it is incumbent on the federal government to end simple financial aid and encourage the poor's transformation to self-sufficiency. In other words, let taxes collected from the general population, not employers, fund the training of recipients for below-poverty-level jobs that will benefit employers.

Moreover, employers should be subsidized for their "kind and gentle" acceptance of these lost welfare souls. Quinlin suggests the utilization of proven methods of granting subsidies to employers; "these include on-the-job-training reimbursements up to an amount that equals half of wages paid during a specific period of time or tax credits on the actual wages paid."

Even wage subsidies to employers are not enough. Work-related benefits must also be publicly paid, Quinlin maintains: "Employers will expect, and must be able to rely on, continued public assistance for other necessary client-support services."

Most urgent of all possible benefits is health. Quinlin argues that Medicaid, a federally funded health plan for the poor, be extended for one year after a job placement because "many small employers are not able to provide company health plans."

While many advocates for the poor are concerned about the impact of benefits ending at the end of one year, Quinlin's conscience is clear. "If the original job placement still does not provide enough income to cover health care or the employer is not able to provide it," he says, "a year's worth of work history and experience is an important credential enabling them to advance more easily to another job with another employer." To date, not a single shred of evidence in the welfare literature suggests former recipients of low-skill training "advance" to anything but more poverty.

To a great extent, and with both conservative and liberal support, business interests got what they wanted from welfare reform. FSA prepares and places welfare recipients in private-sector jobs, mandates that private industry councils be involved in the planning process of local service-delivery agents, extends child care and medical benefits for only one year after a job placement and contains employer subsidies like government-contributed funds for on-the-job training and wage-supplement programs. Of course, the entire cost of the program is paid for by federal and state taxes, while employers escape even the costs of providing benefits.

A fully funded program that enables every participant the assurance of high-level training and the opportunity of a living wage is the only reasonable and equitable approach to welfare reform. Education and training of the poor is not inherently bad. But underfunded programs that require participation under the threat of suspension of benefits and end in continual poverty are akin to workhouses for the poor.

Gary Itzkowitz teaches sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point.

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VIEWPOINT

By Zolton Ferency

LEBTISTS AND OTHERS OUTSIDE OF ESTABLISHMENT-dominated mainstream politics are frequently frustrated by the inaccessibility of the political system. In the past, these frustrations often led to the organization of third parties, and then to greater frustration brought on by our traditional system of district elections in which the majority party gets all. Third-party efforts have failed because this traditional structure favors those who have the means to control mass communication, and because it is difficult to sustain an organization over the long periods of time required to build up followings great enough to win in single-member majority districts.

These problems do not exist for minority parties in parliamentary systems that have some form of proportional representation. Electing even a small number of members to parliament in such a system gives minority parties a public forum. And when no party has a parliamentary majority, minority parties may gain a measure of power and legislative influence by becoming a part of a ruling coalition.

The U.S. Constitution precludes a parliamentary system on the national level, short of a series of constitutional amendments that are beyond the capabilities of any foreseeable political movement. But state governments can more readily be restructured to make them more democratic. I have recently proposed a set of changes in Michigan's governmental structure to do just that.

This is not simply an abstract idea. In recent years the Michigan legislature has received criticism from a variety of sources because of its unwieldy structure, lack of responsiveness on critical state issues and for doing nothing while legislators enjoy one of the highest salary and fringe-benefit levels of any state in the Union.

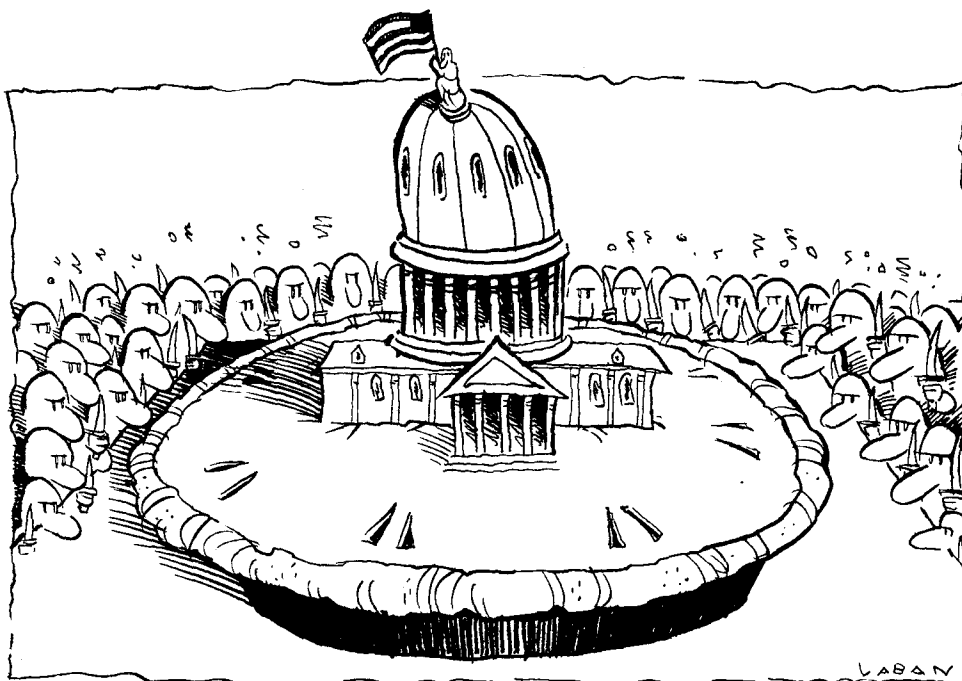
Nor is mine the first attempt to change the situation in Michigan. Various proposals for legislative reform have been presented in recent years, though they have not generated great popular support and, not surprisingly, have been ignored by the legislature. Yet a plan for the complete revamping of the Michigan legislature—one that would speak to most of the shortcomings voiced by recent critics—could have widespread appeal.

A short time ago, I put forward what I believe is such a plan for comprehensive reform of Michigan's state government. My proposal is uncomplicated and designed to dovetail easily into the present state constitution. It contains five basic elements:

1. A single house called the "Legislature," with its members carrying the title of "legislators." I have proposed this because experience in Michigan and elsewhere has failed to demonstrate the need for two houses in a state legislature. A single house with an appropriate committee structure can adequately satisfy the state's legislative needs.

2. A term of office for all legislators of two years, with annual sessions beginning in January and ending on June 31. As presently provided by the state constitution, proposed legislation would carry over from session to session but not into the next elected legislature.

The reason for this shortened legislative



A modest proposal to enhance democracy

year is simply that the current "full time" legislature has failed miserably. It is a perfect example of Parkinson's Law, under which work expands to fill the time provided for it. Michigan taxpayers pay dearly for unnecessary busywork, personal political campaigning by incumbents and various other kinds of political mischief.

3. State legislative districts would be equal in number to U.S. congressional districts and have the same boundaries. They would, therefore, be redistricted following every federal census. This would permit immediate and neutral judicial review of apportionment plans by federal courts and would eliminate the political jungle created by existing state apportionment provisions.

4. Any party's candidate that received five percent or more of the total vote cast for legislative candidates in a legislative dis-

trict would be elected. This would create the possibility of new political parties to engage in the legislative process and would greatly increase voter interest in participating in elections. There would no longer be any "safe" legislative seats. Every vote would count. Political debate on controversial issues would again be routine in the legislature. This might even create a situation in the legislature where political ideas are given as much weight as money.

5. Votes cast in the legislature would be weighted proportionately to the vote received by the individual legislator in the most recent election, and to the total vote for legislators in his district as a percentage of the total in all legislative districts.

For example, if the total legislative vote in a district is eight percent of the total state legislative vote, the legislators elected in that district would have a total of eight percent of the vote in the state legislature. This eight percent would then be shared proportionately among the legislators elected within that district. Thus a Republican who received 50 percent of the district vote would have his vote counted as 4 percent of the total in the legislature, and so on.

Proportional voting is a well-established concept that more accurately reflects the preferences of the electorate than simple majority or plurality voting. It comes as close as possible to pure democracy in a representative system. It can also sharpen debate in the legislature and reduce seamy legislative practices like "logrolling" and "backscratching," where votes on one issue are traded among legislators for votes on another. Proportional voting would also make it more difficult for corporate lobbyists to influence the legislative process.

There is, of course, little prospect for the legislature to consider such a wide-ranging reform plan. But after public discussion of these ideas, a petition drive and a subsequent referendum on the issue is a possibility. If understood by the public, the proposal would win easily.

Zolton Ferency is a former Democratic candidate for governor of Michigan and a professor of criminal justice at Michigan State University.

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Literary canon fodder: dead poets and living disputes

Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910-1945

By Cary Nelson
University of Wisconsin Press
264 pp., \$24.95

By William E. Cain

IN THIS LEARNED, STIMULATING BOOK, Cary Nelson calls for a radical reordering of modern poetry, particularly as it is taught in college and university courses. Nelson persuasively shows the narrowness and exclusivity of the familiar "canon" of 20th-century poets. He describes in rich detail the achievements of many marginalized or forgotten writers, especially African-Americans, women and leftists, whom the limited canon has ignored or devalued. *Repression and Memory* is somewhat unsatisfying in its conclusions, but it is an important study that powerfully connects literature and politics and that affirms cultural pluralism and social change.

Modern American poetry as currently presented to students, Nelson explains, is the poetry of a few figures, the most prominent being Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. Nelson is not intent upon dislodging these writers from their hallowed places but instead wants to demonstrate how the focusing of attention on a few literary masters has prevented us from seeing the tremendous diversity of this century's poetry.

Read scare: "The collapsing of modern poetry's wild diversity into a hypostatized combat between literary titans," Nelson writes, "mirrors the most simplistic of 1950s North American political world views." He adds, "It resembles the ideological strategy of those who promoted a vision of a world contest between freedom and communism, the United States and the Soviet Union, with most of the world's diverse cultures simply invisible to us."

One source, then, for the warping of literary and cultural history was the Cold War and McCarthyite repression. Another was the literary movement known as the "New Criticism," which privileged irony, ambiguity and metaphor in poetic language and drew many of its key terms and ideas from Eliot and Pound—whose poetry, in turn, the New Critics both acclaimed and explicated.

On one level, this was a positive development, for it opened up complex literary works to students and

honed skills in the close reading of verbal nuances and paradoxes. But the rise of the New Criticism also meant that poetry that failed to exploit certain kinds of linguistic patterns or that emphasized broad social and political themes and leftist ideals was shunned or went unrecognized. It disappeared, says Nelson, from our "cultural memory," and in the process readers no longer were able to see poetry as "an effective and distinctive site for cultural critique."

Plowboy poet: Some of the writers Nelson discusses are familiar: Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Gertrude Stein, Kenneth Rexroth, Amy Lowell and Robinson Jeffers. But others, such as Mina Loy and Edwin Rolfe, are little known today.

Consider, for example, H.H. Lewis (1901-85), the "Plowboy Poet" of Missouri. He does not appear in any of the standard anthologies and literary histories now in use, but during the '30s he was a highly visible poet whose verse appeared in a host of radical magazines as well as in *The New Republic* and the esteemed *Poetry* magazine. "If we have lost Lewis and others like him," Nelson remarks, "it is partly because this poetry does not display the surface indecision and ambivalence" that from the '50s onward literary critics and historians came to prize.

Nelson deals with many writers, texts, journals, anthologies and collections and is especially skillful in his account of proletarian and labor poetry (e.g. the *Little Red Song Book* assembled by the Industrial Workers of the World). He also reminds us of the verse written by Sherwood Anderson and Richard Wright—impassioned work that scholars have neglected because of a tendency to identify Anderson and Wright only with their prose. The wonderful il-

a variety of media, that characterized American radicalism's cultural milieu.

As an act of literary history and analysis, Nelson's study is extremely suggestive and exciting. It should turn scholars toward a reconstruction of the field of modern poetry—which will entail, among other things, gathering rare books, pamphlets and texts and getting them into print.

Repression and Recovery should, furthermore, provoke readers to re-

POETRY

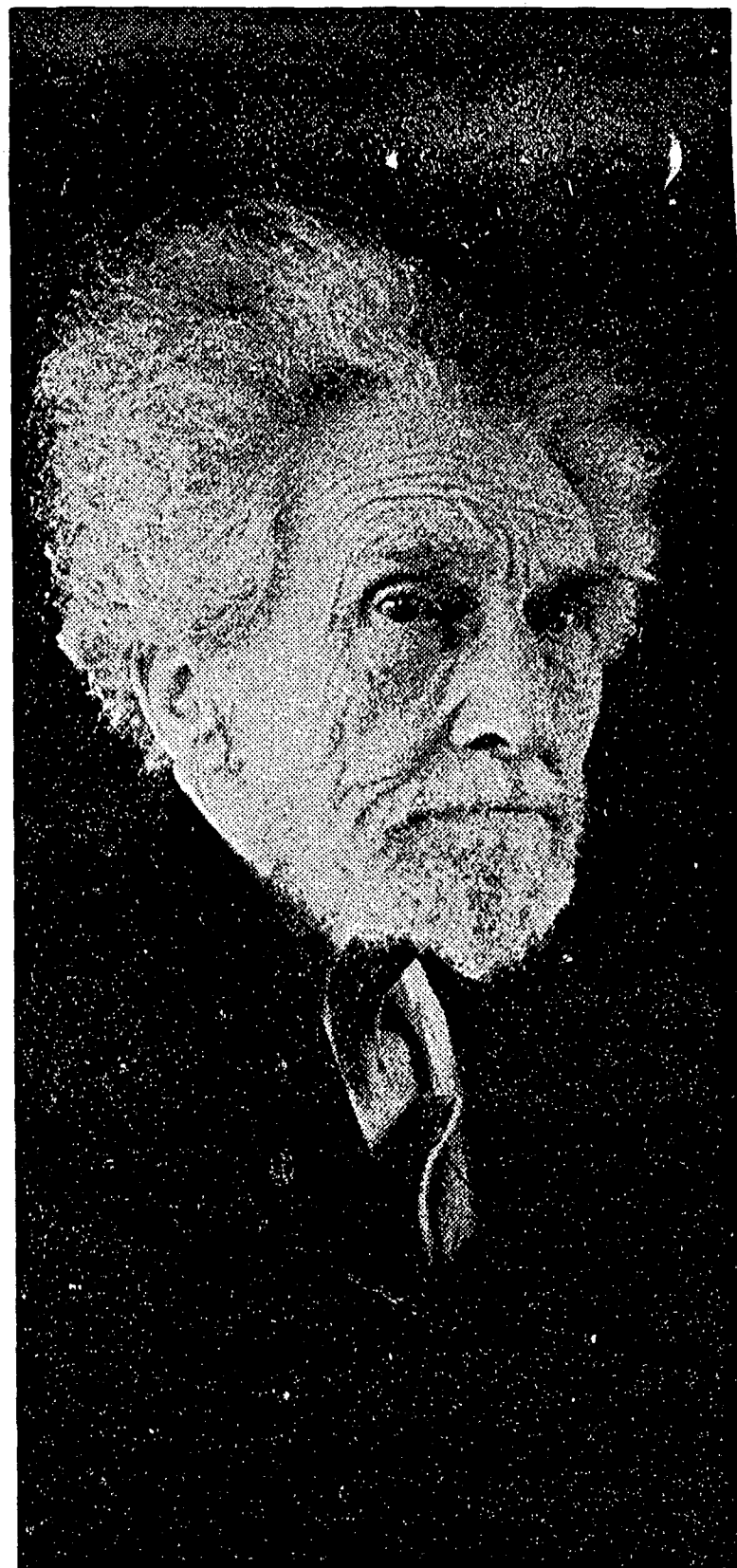
flect upon the gaps and distortions in the subject as they have encountered it in school, and in this sense it is a forthright intervention into the routinized world of humanities education. Nelson writes with impressive knowledge of literary fact and detail and is driven by a strong feeling for the potential of literature to serve as enlightening social and political criticism.

Dodging the dialectic: But it's here, I think, that Nelson gets into trouble. On one level, his argument is compelling. He seems to me obviously right when he insists that scholars and teachers should dramatically expand the canon and when he urges men and women on the left to bring forward for students examples of radical verse and song. As he astutely points out, students are exposed to a restricted range of imaginative possibilities.

Why should the canon of modern poetry include the reactionary texts of Eliot and Pound, which espouse hierarchical order and rigid discipline, and not the sharp-edged, pained radical verse of Claude McKay and Kenneth Fearing? But Nelson never really explains and explores the bond that he affirms between reading radical verse and making radical and revolutionary commitments. He assumes that action will follow from reading the texts, yet he is bearing witness here to his hope rather than providing an actual argument.

What's also missing from Nelson's book is any discussion of the radical responses that might result (and have resulted) from reading Eliot, Pound and the traditional major figures, whatever their overt and often terribly crude politics. It's one thing to pursue "diversity," as Nelson does so well, and another to imply that a political commitment or social awakening will ensue from reading explicitly radical texts and not from others.

During the '50s, students on campuses were fairly quiet, and they were reading Eliot and Pound. Dur-



Ezra Pound: odious ideas and a melodious voice.

ing the '60s, they were reading the same poets (there were no radicals, few women and very few African-Americans in the canon), and yet they were socially aware and active in the women's movement, the fight for civil rights and the hard, bitter campaign against the Vietnam War. Students were making commitments of all sorts, and the limitations of the canon did not hold them back.

Indeed, one could even argue that this canon aided in empowering students, sensitizing them to humane values that the society as a whole had betrayed. This does not mean that we should stick with the old canon of the '50s and '60s but, rather, that we should acknowledge its strengths even as we redefine and supplement it. Oddly, Nelson is not dialectical enough in his analysis; he fails to perceive the manner in which even a conservative poet like Eliot (self-described as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics and Anglo-

Catholic in religion") can serve as a liberating force.

The radical, and hugely underrated, poet Thomas McGrath observed in a recent interview, "I know that T.S. Eliot is a reactionary bastard, looked at one way, but it seems to me that *The Waste Land*, while it's not his best poem or work, I think, by a long lot, is the work in which there is a real revolutionary content. ... Not in a positive sense," McGrath said, "but because it reports a certain—well, I might as well say it in the old way—breakdown of values."

The relationship between literature and political insight and activism is complex and contradictory, as McGrath sensibly sees. It's possible to make a revolution with surprisingly different kinds of tools, and the failure to recognize this strategic truth is the one key shortcoming of Nelson's rewarding book. ■

William E. Cain teaches in the English department at Wellesley College.

Modern American poets who emphasized social and political themes have disappeared from our "cultural memory."

illustrations included in *Repression and Recovery* help show how leftist, socialist and communist poetry of the past found graphic reinforcement. These enable Nelson to portray vividly the dynamic energies, in

By Murray L. Bob

New Age just new page in old book

I HAVE THE SENSE THAT THE NEW AGE IS slowing down," Says Davis Dutton, co-owner of a Los Angeles bookstore that carries New Age materials. Peggy Taylor of Webster's of Milwaukee agrees: "Five years ago most bookstores renamed their occult section 'New Age.' Probably in a year, New Age as a term will die and we'll have an occult section once again."

The Nov. 3, 1989, *Publishers' Weekly* includes an essay by Jeremy Tarcher, pioneer New Age publisher. Entitled, "Here's to the end of New Age," it concludes: "This decade has offered such a thorough exploitation of all that is classified as New Age that there is little fresh to say. We've cooked the New Age chicken 1,001 ways, and it is increasingly difficult to come up with exciting, fresh recipes."

What was—or is—New Age? Most observers agree that its roots are found in the '60s quest for fresh options. While some young people sought political alternatives, others tended toward personal alternatives. The hippie who began by meditating and demonstrating found himself, after the end of the Vietnam War, focusing on changing himself rather than his society. It seemed a lot easier to do.

Critics labeled this variously as narcissism, me-generationism, escapism or surrender. Fasting, meditating, yoga, macrobiotics, the cultivation of "higher powers," Eastern mysticism, channeling, curative crystals and the rediscovery of past lives increasingly occupied the time of many of the grownup flower children.

Dogmas run over by karma: The New Age mingled hope, hype, holiness and hucksterism—the 4-H Club of the Reagan era. Nowhere was this more evident than in publishing, where many new imprints were established to fill the demand for books on personal growth and "transformation." Because New Age grew out of dissatisfaction with the status quo, it needed unconventional dogmas. For new ideas the publishers seeking New Age new revenues turned to—where else?—old belief systems.

Dutton says, "I feel that there is a kind of cynicism on the part of some of the publishers who just spew this stuff out, much of it regurgitation of what's been around 100 to 200 years, just to make a buck."

Philip Sansone of Book People in Austin, Texas, puts it this way: "New Age is just a category that publishers have latched onto in order to market a certain segment of society."

What segment? First the college-educated baby boomers who came out of the protest movements. Their numbers were increased by more conventional types attracted to metaphysical moonshine by the popularity of Shirley MacLaine's books—as well as by her glamour—especially after more of the rich and famous confessed to being devotees

of channeling, astrology, reincarnation, etc.

Dabbling in the dubious: A herd instinct took over as it became first "safe" and then chic to "disclose" one's fascination with various cult and occult notions and practices. Atavism, barbarism, superstition and simple stupidity all "came out of the closet" at about the same time. It had become respectable to dabble in the dubious.

But there is more involved in the

PUBLISHING

wide acceptance of New Age, and Dutton may have put his finger on it when he said, "The popularity of New Age is due to the failure of our educational system to instill rational thinking." New Agers are educated, even college-educated. They can read. But whether they read critically is a separate question. We have made so much out of learning the mechanics of reading that the need for evaluating what one reads has become neglected.

If New Age fades, what will happen to those whose need to believe made it so successful in the first place? Not to worry. There will be new (old) cerebral sanctuaries for the superstitious. What has yet to be determined is the new term under whose rubric the warmed-over wisdom of the ages will be served up as "the latest thing." It has to be broad enough to encompass such old chestnuts as alchemy, astrology, cabala, *I Ching*, Tarot, black magic, white magic, witchery, Earth religions and Tibetan and Tantric Buddhism.

More important, it must include recent tendencies, which will give the next stage of New Age its distinctive flavor and probably its new name. The most popular "new" currents are: holistic health; mythology, with subsets for goddess and Native American religions; 12-step recovery programs; and visualization, or imaging.

• **Healing.** Insofar as the marketing of literature is concerned, holistic health and alternative healing have the inestimable advantage of being marketable not only through traditional bookstore channels but also in the thousands of health-food stores where the faithful graze. If there is an "in" word today, it is surely "healing." Consider the titles of the following runaway bestsellers: *You Can Heal Your Life*, *Healing the Shame*, *Healing Your Sexual Self*, *You the Healer*, *The Dancing Healers*, *Where the Healing Waters Meet* and *The Healing Zone*.

The appetite for miracles being what it is, the interest in such modalities as Ayurvedic medicine, crystals, therapeutic touch, homeopathy, acupuncture, radionics, psychic healing, naturopathy, chiropractic, aromatherapy (something about this

smells) grows by leaps and bounds.

• **Mythology.** What Shirley MacLaine and her 35,000-year-old former self, Emmanuel, were to channeling, Bill Moyers and the blissfully defunct Joseph Campbell are to mythology: 35 million viewers saw the program, and 100,000 bought videocassettes of *The Power of Myth*. The goddess religions occupy the spiritual penumbra of feminism: every mundane movement has its extramundane reflection. Native American religions that grew out of matriarchal cultures have the same attraction—although their revival also has to do with the growth of ecological consciousness. A prominent German member of the Green Party said, "In Germany, ecology is the basis of a political movement; in America, it seems to be the basis of a religion."

• **Twelve-step recovery programs** from addictions are patterned on Alcoholics Anonymous. Every habit, sin and personal problem is now seen as an "addiction." Thus we have sexual addiction, drug addiction, compulsive gambling, alcoholism, overeating, smoking, sleeping too much, undereating, dependency, co-dependency, shopping, overuse of credit cards, hand-washing, house-cleaning and cyclothymia. These have called forth a flood of addiction and recovery books, tapes, lectures

and workshops by recovered or lapsed addicts (self-diagnosed).

There is glamour and money in the A and R (addiction and recovery) business: athletes, movie stars and wives of famous politicians grace the boards with gripping testimonials, public confessionals, breast-beating and self-flagellation. Not even our elementary schools are safe from the maudlin confessions, hand- and heart-wringing, dire warnings and threats of those who have "done wrong and seen the light." Sinning and saving are back in style.

• **Visualization, or imaging,** is especially big among the holistically healthy who believe that if you picture white blood cells fighting cancer cells it will kill them. It is equally big in big-business circles, where the ultimate encomium these days is to be thought a "visionary"

Atavism, barbarism, superstition and simple stupidity all "came out of the closet" at about the same time.

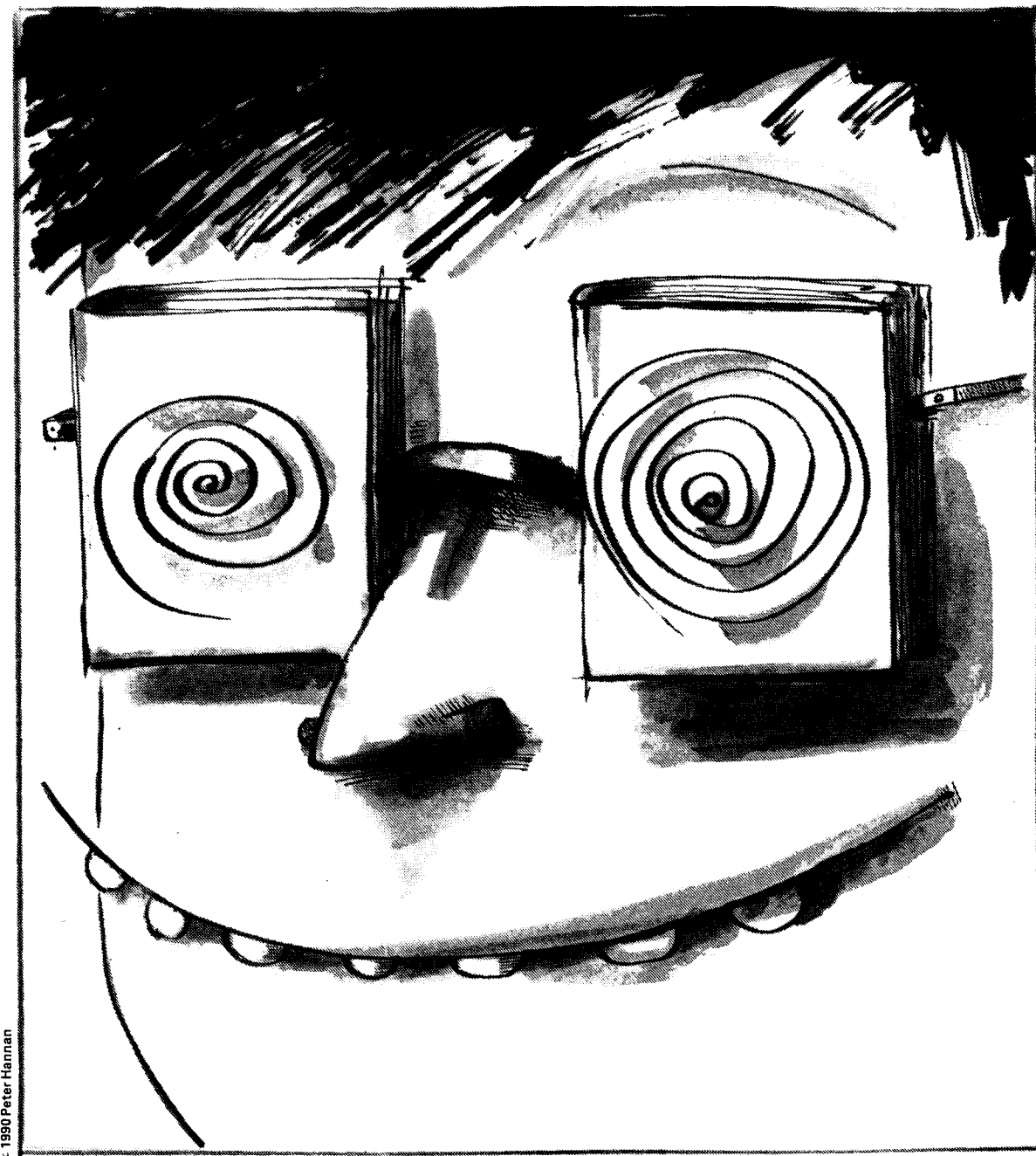
and where "visioning" is the apogee of commercial creativity. Popular book titles are: *Creative Visualization*, *Healing Visualization*, *Creative Imagery* and, for those so insecure they need to have all the bases covered, *Creative Visualization: The Power of Myth*.

The words "creative" and "power" are power words these days. Primitive people used to think you got smart by eating the brains of animals. A lot of "smart" people today seem to think that if you use the word "power" you become powerful.

We are assured by Robert Hall, executive editor of the New Age publisher Humanics, that the firm's books are in use by DuPont, IBM, Tenneco, Texaco and the Mitchell-Bradford Chemical Corporation. Is this the reason why the nation's industries seem to be losing...power?

Fifty years ago a publishing joke was that if you wanted to produce a bestseller you had to cover three burning interests of the public: Lincoln, doctors and dogs. Thus a sure-fire winner would be titled *Lincoln's Doctor's Dog*. Today a bestseller is more likely to be called *Creatively Imaging Power Sex with a Goddess While Recovering from an Addiction to Visionary Healing*. ■

Murray L. Bob is a freelance writer living in Jamestown, N.Y.





Czechoslovakian filmmaker Jan Nemec's *Diamonds of the Night*: formally complex, stylistically audacious and virtually forgotten.

By Patrick Z. McGavin

Forman and Nemec: up and down in Czech New Wave

THERE'S A JOKE," SAYS JAN NEMEC, the Czech-born filmmaker. "What's the difference between Dubcek and Gorbachov?" "About 21 years," he laughs. "It's just the time. Sometimes it works for you and sometimes against you," he says, laughing again, but nervously. Time, it seems, has repeatedly worked against him.

Unlike his celebrated compatriot Milos Forman, Nemec is virtually unknown in the U.S., his adopted country since his forced exile in 1974. Nemec's formally complex, stylistically audacious works such as *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) and *The Report on the Party and the Guests* (1966) revealed a brazen, hallucinatory talent. Both Nemec and Forman borrowed freely from the radical structure and technique of the French New Wave, allowing for a shocking and frequently exhilarating merging of the political and the personal.

But in the wake of events of Aug. 20, 1968, when five Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia and crushed the democratic rebellion of Alexander Dubcek's "Prague Spring," Nemec was kicked out of the film industry after completing his third feature, *Martyrs of Love*. By chance, Forman was already out of the country, at work on the script for *Taking Off* (1971). "When Dubcek was completely ousted from power in the fall of '69, they confiscated my passport," says Nemec. "I completely wasted five years of my life. I wasn't allowed to travel or to do anything.

Finally I was forced out in '74, and a few years later I was stripped of my citizenship, which was considered the highest form of punishment."

Westward no: He subsequently spent five years near Los Angeles trying to find work as a writer and director. "It completely failed," he says. "I was never able to go through the system, the agents, the presidents. I was never in the right place at the right time." He doesn't even have American citizenship, after 12 years. No wonder he considers himself "absolutely misplaced." A line from Polish-born poet Czeslaw Milosz, on whom Nemec recently finished a documentary for KQED-TV in San Francisco, might easily apply to the filmmaker: "Ill at ease in the tyranny, ill at ease in the republic/ In the one I longed for freedom, in the other for the end of corruption."

Of late Nemec has found work at Facets Multimedia Center in Chicago for the Dreiske Performance Company, an avant-garde theater collective, shooting video and film pieces that are integrated into the works of director Nicole Dreiske. "What I'm doing now for Facets I like, but this job could be done by any student of film."

"What is going on now in Prague

is fascinating," Nemec says. "I witnessed German invasion in '39, their defeat in '45, Communist takeover in '48, and I was involved in the activities of '68. I was there for all important events in our contemporary history. I am just sad and angry that I am ... in Chicago. I know that I could be useful."

If you saw Philip Kaufman's film adaptation of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, then you know Nemec's work indirectly. Nemec was the technical adviser and had a small role in the film. Most significantly, Kaufman seamlessly juxtaposed into the film footage secretly shot by Nemec the night of the '68 invasion. Nemec was preparing a documentary on a Czech Jew who emigrated to San Antonio when the Russian tanks entered Prague. With a professional crew and cinematographer, he surreptitiously recorded the invasion and smuggled the footage into Vienna, where the first uncensored coverage of the invasion was shown via satellite. (The material was later assembled into a 22-minute film, *Oratorio for Prague*.)

Yet the work on Kaufman's high-profile film didn't advance Nemec's own career. I asked him if there is any difference between the apparatchiks in Czechoslovakia and their Hollywood equivalents. "There's

no difference. They all lie the same, only in California they don't smell as bad and they wear better clothes." Nemec's Hollywood profile is so low that one woman he met exclaimed, "Jan Nemec! I thought you were dead."

A rude assault: The ascent of the Czech New Wave, or "New Czech Miracle," was brief and elliptical. The cultural centerpiece of Dubcek's am-

bitious plan to institute democratic reforms, this movement rudely assaulted the rules and forms of Eastern European cinema. Trained and educated at the Prague Film Faculty (FAMU), and benefiting from the Barrandov studios, the most advanced production facilities in Eastern Europe, the Czech New Wave held out the promise of a vital new direction.

The explosion of talent was virtually unmatched in post-war Eastern European cinema: Nemec, Forman, Ivan Passer, Vera Chytilova, Jaromil Jires, Vojtech Jasný, Jiri Menzel and Evald Schorm. The other important figures were the two great cinematographers Miroslav On-

Milos Forman in a PBS profile directed by Vojtech Jasný.



dricek, Forman's frequent cameraman, and Jaroslav Kucera, Chytilova's husband. The brilliant set designer and writer Ester Krumbachova, who was instrumental in the progression of Nemec and Chytilova, and the writers Josef Skvorecky and Arnold Lustig, also figured prominently.

International credibility was advanced when three Czech films were slotted into official competition at

FILM

the 1968 Cannes Film Festival. (With some irony, Nemec points out, the festival was closed down by French leftists led by Jean-Luc Goddard protesting the firing of Henri Langlois as director of the Cinematheque Française). The Czech New Wave crashed in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation.

Refused the use of state funds or facilities and their films blacklisted, Nemec, Forman, Passer, Kadar and Jasny were forced into exile. Chytilova, Jires and Menzel continued to work in Czechoslovakia, but their workload decreased significantly. With the obvious exception of Forman, none of the filmmakers from this group ever recovered. (Passer's *Cutter's Way*, 1981, was a critical hit but a popular miss.) Czech films have exhibited little of their formal complexity and subversive flair in the years since, with the possible exceptions of the work by surreal puppet masters Jan Svankmajer and Jaraj Jakubisko.

In June 1988, Facets Multimedia organized a 20-year retrospective and invited some integral directors to reflect on the "Czech film miracle." It turned into a painful elegy, a bitter resignation of loss and separation.

Forman's formula: On the final weekend of October 1989, Milos Forman sits in a posh Chicago hotel before a group of national journalists discussing his latest film, *Valmont*, a "freely adapted" reworking of Choderlos de Laclos' superb 1782 epistolary novel, *Les liaisons dangereuses*. He's in the enviable position of working at his own pace, the reward of making films that collect a passel of Academy Awards and earn their investors a healthy return. The most famous and successful of the Czech directors, his life hasn't been spared heartbreak or loss. His parents were executed by the Nazis in World War II.

Forman graduated from FAMU as a screenwriter in 1957 and promptly found work on the films of Alfred Radok and Martin Fric. After making a documentary in 1963, he showed the earliest signs of his spirited, absurdist talent with *Black Peter* and followed with the two undisputed masterpieces of the Czech New Wave, *Loves of a Blonde* (1965) and *Firemen's Ball* (1968), in collaboration with the gifted writers (and eventual directors) Ivan Passer and Jaroslav Papousek.

Forman was in Paris at the height of the political crisis, in pre-production for what would become his American debut, the deft social com-



A scene from Jan Nemec's *The Report on the Party and the Guests*.

edy *Taking Off* (1971), which was a commercial failure. Significantly, it would be the last film he directed taken from an original screenplay (by John Guare and Jean-Claude Carriere); he has worked steadily in popular forms, adapting in succession *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's*

From the fleeting Prague Spring to the long winter of exile: Jan Nemec and Milos Forman exemplify the ambiguous legacy of the Czech New Wave.

Nest (1975), *Hair* (1979), *Ragtime* (1981) and *Amadeus* (1984).

What is fascinating about Forman's American work is that each film becomes a quiet and mournful meditation on the outsider; his protagonists are losers or convicts or hopeless—on a free fall from power. It's possible, even necessary, to read into this Forman's own status as a foreigner positioned outside the culture he works in.

"Usually I don't know what I'm doing next when I'm finishing one movie. And then it takes time before your heart is ready to fall in love with another project. It's difficult picking up the next object of your affection when you're still in love with somebody else," Forman said.

It's impossible to escape an essential question: why have two artists from virtually identical backgrounds and experience found this country so different? Why does one prosper and the other struggle?

"Milos was lucky," says Nemec, "in that his Czech films were comedies. Very Eastern European in style. My films were very limited audience.

One thing, my films were black and white. Second, subtitles. No stars. No sex and violence. I was unable to convince any producer that I was able to do a film like Jim Jarmusch or, you know, [Jonathan] Demme, something that could be intellectual and have an audience. You are only as good as your last film. They ask me, 'When was your last film?' and I say, '1966.'"

Nemec and Forman remain very close. Nemec talks about politely asking Forman to pitch a story idea to a producer on his behalf. "Milos told me, 'Jan, I could do this and they would listen out of a favor to me, but they would want something in return and I don't know if I'm willing to do that. The reality is they are interested only in me.'"

From New Wave to no wave: Nemec's *The Report on the Party and the Guests* and Forman's *Firemen's Ball* were "banned forever," along with Evald Schorm's *Pastor's End* and Vojtech Jasny's *All My Countrymen*. "Of course, Milos is a very good filmmaker, with a lot of discipline," says Nemec. "He has always been very good at knowing how to com-

municate with people in power. He is very diplomatic, socially successful. I never got on with other directors. I was always at conflict with people in my country. Milos' films had a very big audience. They never tried punishing him. He could make fools of these people but, on the other hand, convince them that he's not so bad himself."

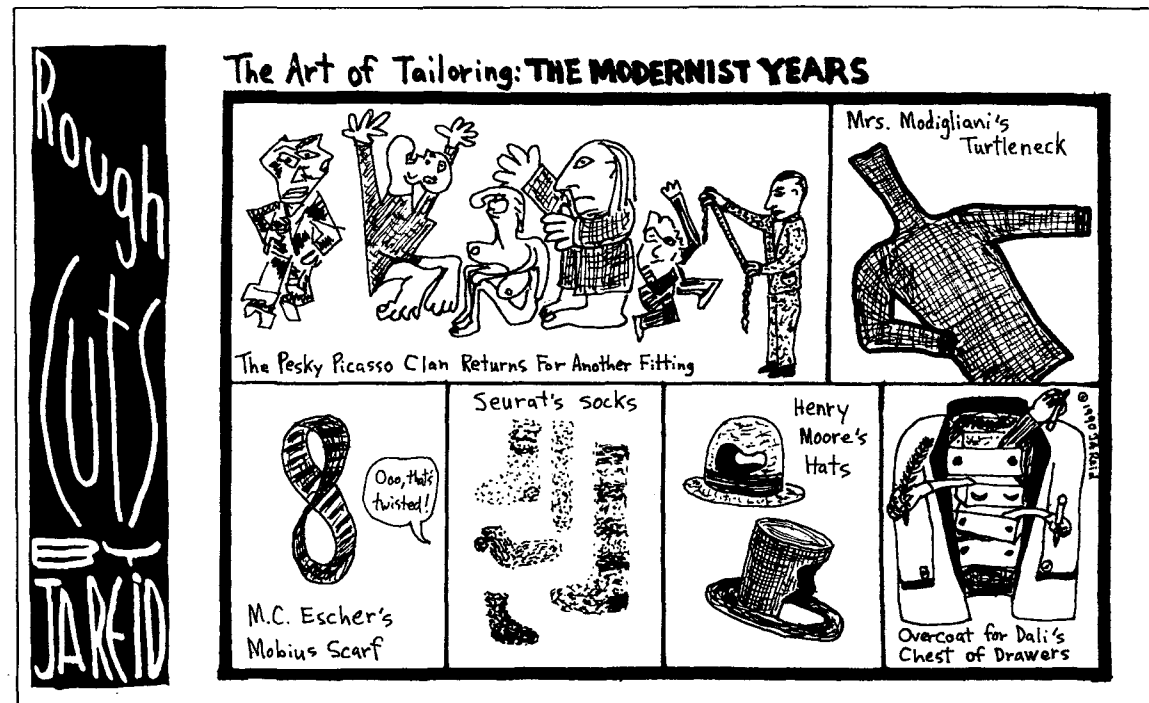
No matter how far Nemec removes himself from August 1968, the pain of seeing the Czech New Wave collapse was deeply unsettling. "I was mad that I didn't have a machine gun, only a camera. People were so shocked and mad and angry; nobody had any guns, and the army was locked in a barracks. If I had the chance again, I would not be making films, I would be shooting. Emotion was so strong; it was like a rape, a humiliation of the country."

At last Jan Nemec has a purpose. The vast social, political and economic changes that resulted in a new democratic reform movement, coalescing in the political rejuvenation of Alexander Dubcek and the rise of jailed playwright Vaclav Havel should probably allow for his

return to Czechoslovakia—particularly since he and Havel are second cousins. Just before the '68 invasion they had been collaborating on a screenplay about heart transplants, the black market and contemporary Czechoslovakia that was intended as a large-scale, U.S.-Czechoslovak co-production. Their works have some startling thematic similarities, especially the use of a Kafka-like allegory found in both *The Report on the Party and the Guests* and Havel's first work, *The Garden Party*.

Milos Forman, it should be pointed out, shot large parts of *Amadeus* in Prague before the political climate shifted, and he recently returned there to a hero's welcome when he showed *Valmont* to students and intellectuals. Jan Nemec is hopeful he can go back to making movies, but he braces for an old reality. "Maybe when I arrive, they will say, 'Nemec, you are too old. You never produced any films in America. There is a new generation. We need someone who is contemporary.'"

Patrick Z. McGavin is a Chicago-area writer.



Mabou Mines

Continued from page 24

The other major technical transformation in Mabou Mines' *Lear* is the result of the ensemble's efforts to cinematize their acting. "There's a lot of close-up acting, under-the-chin shots like Orson Welles," says Breuer. This particular transformation started after Breuer read a biography of Welles. "I started looking at all Orson's Shakespeare films. I got absolutely fascinated by how he made them voluptuous, melodramatic, stagy—and they moved like wildfire. I decided to get rid of all the entrances and exits in *Lear*, so there's no time wasted with people walking on and off stage. Instead of five acts, we've got about 32 sequences, separated one from the other by shots. I worked this thing out with [lighting designer] Arden Fingerhut to try to get a seamless continuum. I tried to make it feel like a Welles movie—we got five hours of material in a play that's now down to under three hours."

The biggest frustration for the company in the development of this enormous project was the financial strictures: often the group would rehearse for several weeks and then have to disband until further funding sources appeared on the horizon. "The benefit of rehearsing piecemeal over several years," muses Raymond, "is that you have long periods of assimilation. The drawback is that those rehearsal periods are so far apart that some of what you've developed gets lost in the recesses of your brain." Adds Breuer, "Now I know why Orson did those Almaden ads."

Margaret Spillane is a former assistant editor of the New Haven *Independent* and writes frequently about theater.

CALENDAR

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

NEW YORK, NY

January 29-February 6

THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL
CHANGE SWEEPS EASTERN EUROPE—Arthur Maglin; alternate Mondays beginning Jan. 29; 8 p.m.; 5 sessions; \$50.
PLACE & NATION: JEWISH IDENTITY, STATE OF ISRAEL & THE INTIFADA—Jonathan Boyarin; Monday, Jan. 29; 6 p.m.; \$5.
EL SALVADOR: UPDATE AND ANALYSIS—Jack Hammond, Gustavo Acosta; Tuesday, Jan. 30; 8 p.m.; \$5.
WOMEN IN EASTERN EUROPE—Jill Benderley, Manuela Dobos & Ludmila Melchior; Wednesday, Jan. 31; 8 p.m.; \$5.
GRAMSCI ON REVOLUTION—Frank Rosengarten; Friday, Feb. 2; 8 p.m.; \$5.
SPANISH FOR ACTIVISTS—Cecilia Cortez; Saturdays, Feb. 3-March 31; 11 a.m.; 9 sessions; \$125. Pre-registration is required.
U.S. POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL—Sheila Ryan, Donna Nevel & Jim Paul; Sunday, Feb. 4; 7 p.m.; \$5.
PUERTO RICO'S TROUBLED ROAD TO DECOLONIZATION—Julio Rosado, Bob Lederer; Monday, Feb. 5; 8 p.m.; \$5.
MARXIST THEORISTS FROM THE THIRD WORLD—Lloyd D'Aguilar; alternate Mondays beginning Feb. 5; 6 p.m.; 5 sessions; \$50.
MARX'S DIALECTICAL METHOD—Bertell Ollman; Tuesdays, Feb. 6-27; 8 p.m.; 4 sessions; \$40.
 Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at the New York Marxist School, 79 Leonard St., New York, NY 10011, (212) 941-0332.

ROCHESTER, NY

January 29

Informational meeting for anyone wishing to learn about **PROPOSED RADIOACTIVE WASTE DUMP SITES** in the watershed of the Genesee River. Mon-

day, Jan. 29 at 7:30 p.m. Unitarian Church of Rochester, 220 S. Winton Road, Rochester, NY. For more information contact: Concerned Citizens, P.O. Box 441, Dansville, NY 14437.

CHICAGO

February 2

"Eyewitness to Eastern Europe," an appraisal of the impact of the unfolding political revolutions. A forum sponsored by Chicago Solidarity, with William Pelz, history professor at DePaul University, and Joel Horowitz, longtime socialist and member of Solidarity. Friday, 7:30 p.m., 3306 N. Seminary. Admission \$3.00/\$1.50. For more information: (312) 275-8937.

February 11-14

Jennifer Casolo, charged in El Salvador with hiding weapons in her "backyard," will be speaking throughout Chicago Feb. 11-14. Two featured events will take place: Sunday (Feb. 11), 7 p.m. at The Commons, 2324 N. Fremont, De Paul University; and Wednesday (Feb. 14), 12:15 p.m. luncheon, Grace Place, 637 S. Dearborn, \$10. To RSVP or for more information: Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, (312) 663-4398.

OAKLAND, CA

February 15-18

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SANE/Freeze National Congress Office, 1819 H. Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 862-9740.

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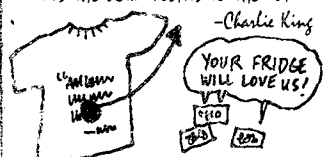
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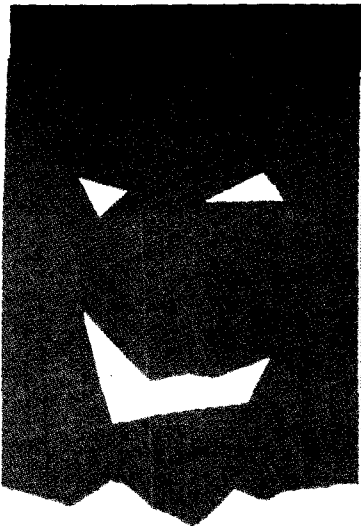
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Ruth Maleczek as Lear and Lola Pashalinski as Kent in Mabou Mines' new production.



Jonathan Atkin

King Lear, Queen for a Day

By Margaret Spillane

ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO UNDERSTAND our gender culture," says avant-garde theater director Lee Breuer, "is to read Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. Only this time, women are the Algerians, men are the French. What's going on with gender now is just as overt a revolution: when you get this man in Montreal killing 14 women just because they're women, you know you're at war."

That war is raging both inside and outside the current project of the Mabou Mines troupe, a recasting, with Breuer directing, of Shakespeare's *King Lear* as a battle of gender, race and class in the American South of the 1950s. As conceived by Mabou Mines, Lear is the white mother of three good ol' boys named Goneril, Regan and Cordelion. Gloucester, her African-American counterpart, has mothered two daughters, the black-skinned, legitimate offspring Edna, and the mulatto bastard Elva.

After a workshop performance of this *Lear*, a woman in the audience huffed up to Breuer and said, "I am incensed that Lear is so crude. Lear is noble!" Breuer won't be surprised if he gets some similar reactions from "so-called Shakespeare purists." In fact, Breuer feels most productions of Shakespeare have suffered from what he calls "a Victorian imposition." Why, he asks, "should we assume that Shakespeare has to be noble and clean and spoken in the Victorian tones of the Oxbridge set?"

Mean play and the play of meaning: Ruth Maleczek, whose caressing, corrosive, five-octave voice suffuses the title role with terror and tenderness, agrees: "Americans don't like their Shakespeare to be tampered with. They like it to be a bit distanced from them—the language helps them do that. As Shakespeare wrote it, *Lear* is a mean play. But people would rather regard *Lear* as a noble play, so it is helpful if *Lear* is a king—it keeps it in the realm of royalty, keeps it away from us. It makes people more comfortable."

Maleczek thinks some preview audiences' misgivings about messing with the Bard may not have been due to an incapacity to accept anything but the "Masterpiece Theater" version: "After all, there's been so much adapting done—people have done Shakespeare in black T-shirts or as musical comedy. So maybe the problem is a lot about women. A lot. Maybe you can

have any kind of setting you want, but you can't change gender."

Power relationships between the races can be fairly codified: "Upper-middle-class theatergoers," says Breuer, "flock to see the *Driving Miss Daisy* version of the black-white Southern relationship: the driver's big dream is to someday have his boss' old car." Here the two matriarchs Lear and Gloucester are roughly equal in force and presence, but, says Breuer, "Lear has more money." That balance in fact brings this *Lear* closer to the original than some productions: Maleczek explains that in Shakespeare's text, the Gloucester story is as present as the Lear story, but "the standard way to cut the play is to cut the Gloucester story. Here they're just about 50-50."

Breuer thinks it's "safe" to fool around with the theatrical canon as long as the adaptation stays playful: "Peter Sellars does stuff for people who enjoy campy-vamping Mozart. But *épater la bourgeoisie* is not my deal. Peter has basically upper-class tastes, and when that's where you're coming from, you can tickle and titillate and turn over the icon because everybody knows you really love the icon. To do that play about Trump Tower—those are the kind of jokes you'd put together for a Phillip Morris cocktail party at BAM [Brooklyn Academy of Music]."

Mabou Mines is hardly campy-vamping *Lear*. None of the production's controversial transformations of gender, place, race or accent was made lightly. "I think people are afraid we've done this as sort of a lark," says Maleczek. "Even though there's a lot of sex and comedy in *Lear*, it's a deadly serious play." And despite Breuer's characterization of Mabou Mines' approach to the play as "throwing a grenade" into "a century of Oxbridge dominations of the Shakespeare oeuvre," the missile lands without harming the Bard's text:

Voluptuous volubility: This is not so surprising, since the project started as a very comprehensive desire: "I wanted to say the words," says Maleczek. "I love the language. I've been thinking about saying the words for about 10 years. But changing the gender was Lee's idea."

Work on the current *Lear* project began more than three years ago. "In the beginning," she continues, "we were more concerned about aesthetic questions: would it sound right? It turned out to be a much larger feminist play than was apparent at first."

Virtually the only changes of language are the pronouns—or alterations of such lines as Lear's declaration to Goneril, "I am ashamed that thou has power to shake my manhood thus," which becomes "shake my motherhood." Bill Raymond, who plays good ol' boy Goneril, thinks that the sex changes constitute "not so much a subversion as an equation. There's nothing intrinsically feminine about Goneril. And there's nothing intrinsically masculine about Lear: the vanity, the cruelty, the desire to retain power without assuming the responsibility for that power."

What makes this production work, Raymond feels, is its dramatic oppositions: "Look at the set, for example. It opposes the emotional tenor of the play. It's quite fanciful and pink and cartoonish. And these costumes—you could put them in *Fiorello!* They oppose. They're quite cheery. Even though this is a play with a great deal of pugnacious humor, there is all that terrifying stuff that goes on." The idea of opposition "is carried to all ends: between black and white, women and men, those who have and those who have not."

Drag queen as jester: Actor Greg Mehrten's translation of the Fool from jester to drag queen permits further exploration of gender roles.

Sex changes but few text changes in Mabou Mines' adventurous new production.

Wearing a bouffant platinum wig, white strapless dress and a necklace with a candy-cane dildo astride a pair of golden balls, Mehrten sends up all the most mummified conventions of femininity. Hiking his skirt slowly up his thigh, he breathes, "Have more than thou showest/Speak less than thou knowest."

"My image of what is going on between the Fool and Lear," says Breuer, "is this kid was an orphan, or the illegitimate child of some third cousin thrown on Lear's doorstep when he was a baby. Lear took him in like she took in one of her dogs. She nursed him, grew to love him. Ultimately he started to want to become her in the *Génét* sense—to become is to love—and he'd wear her old clothes. And so this incredible relationship happens in which he replaces all of her children and becomes the beloved. So the Fool can insult her, do what none of the children can do—tell her the truth."

What may appear in this production to be an assault on one of the most cherished aspects of traditional stagings of Shakespeare—the replacement of plummy British accents with Dixie intonations—is actually a reinstatement of the playwright's text to its proper tones. Maleczek and Breuer became excited about this prospect after watching a segment of the PBS series *The Story of English* on how various forms of spoken English were transplanted onto American shores. "The English colonists who settled in the Northeast came from East Anglia," recounts Breuer, "and the central literary work of their culture was the King James Bible, which had a rather limited vocabulary. The other wave of settlers came out of England's West Country, and their central oeuvre was Shakespeare. The latter had almost double the vocabulary and was as free-wheeling as the other one was frozen."

"Now this Elizabethan accent is still there in some of the Carolina Islands. It moved through West Virginia and Tennessee and all the way to Arkansas. It got infused with Irish, Scottish, African-American and French influences here and there, but the basis of the speech patterns you find in country and western music is what came over to Jamestown from the west of England." So Southern accents, Breuer asserts, put the language of *Lear* more in accord with the spoken English known to Shakespeare's ears. The conventional "Shakespearean" intonations to which we're accustomed "are an upper-class Victorian imposition."

Continued on page 22